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A GLANCE
INTO THE
KINGDOM OF GRACE,
&c. &c.

“For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our Life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.”—
COL. iii. 3, 4.

A GLANCE

INTO THE

KINGDOM OF GRACE

EIGHT SERMONS

✓
BY F. W. KRUMMACHER, D.D.

AUTHOR OF "ELIJAH THE TISHBITE."

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN

BY THE REV. MAXIMILIAN GENESTE, M.A.

INCUMBENT MINISTER OF HOLY TRINITY CHURCH,

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THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

SERMONS are a species of reading held in little estimation by the world. Among literary productions, by far the lowest place is assigned them, as a light and airy commodity by which knowledge cannot be promoted or extended ; and an Authorship which is limited to Sermons, is regarded as of no value, and in the award of fame and merit is deemed but as dust in the balance. Collections of Sermons are nevertheless showered down upon us, and every successive season threatens a new flood, by which an inundation may at length be apprehended, not, however, of serious consequence ; since, almost without exception, they descend with rapid haste into the deep and silent pit of oblivion, soon enough—alas, in few cases can it be said too soon—to find their grave, and terminate their ephemeral existence.

Under such circumstances, and amid the loud complaint of the reading community, made without intermission respecting the multitudes of religious

compositions with which, like a swarm of locusts, they are visited and overwhelmed, the Author of the accompanying volume, which, moreover, makes its appearance in the despised form of Sermons, does not find himself under the least concern to justify its publication. To use the hackneyed pretence, and say, that he published it by "particular request," his conscience will not allow; and of the value of his productions, to say the truth, he has no very great opinion: at the same time, he would have it understood, that the well known tenets contained therein are to him beyond all worth, "better than gold and fine gold," and more precious than life itself.

The Author is perfectly sensible, that these Sermons little accord with the form and standard of the modern school, nor would they pass the ordeal of critical acumen. The sapient mother, Didactic Wisdom, if she should deign to look upon these productions, would see them, for the most part, so inartificial, so disconnected and irregular, that she could not possibly acknowledge them as her offspring, but would pronounce over them "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin;" Expository Wisdom would with displeasure observe, in certain parts, the absence of the literal meaning; another school would complain of the want of good taste; while Critical Philosophy would find fault with the deficiency of sound reasoning.

The author hopes, by this self-condemnation, to propitiate those worthy gentlemen who sit in judgment, and he would give utterance to the wish, that they would admit, as an excuse for the publication of these discourses, that he both preached and committed them to writing, not for the wise men after the flesh, nor for the mighty, nor for the noble, of whom the apostle in one place speaks, and whose applause he must be content to forego ; but for those whom man despiseth, but whom God hath chosen, for the sojourners in Mesech, and especially for the babes among them, to whom these sermons may perhaps convey a little honey from the slain lion ; as it is written, “ Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong, sweetness.”

As it respects the title of the publication, “ A Glance into the Kingdom of Grace,” it may be observed, that it is designed to point out the subject treated of, since the sermons refer, for the most part, to the daily experience and inward state of the children of grace in the way of salvation. That respecting Issachar would have been omitted in this collection, if the Author had been aware that it had already made its appearance in another place.

The Sacred Writings, his own heart, and the people who surround him, constitute together, the

Volume of instruction to which the preacher of the gospel should especially direct his studies and inquiries, and from which he should borrow the materials of all his Discourses.

If, therefore, this publication should be recognized by the experienced as genuine gleanings from that living and inexhaustible Volume ; and if, here and there, a hungry soul should receive from these crumbs any comfort and refreshment, then all the desires will be accomplished with which the Author, with great diffidence, sends them forth into the world.

THE AUTHOR.

THE
TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

THE name of Krummacher is now familiar to the English ear; and the satisfaction with which some of his works have already been received, might alone be deemed a sufficient apology for adding to their number: but there is another reason, of still greater force—the intrinsic merits of his writings are such as cannot fail to recommend them to the lovers of scriptural simplicity and truth.

It has been the endeavour of the Translator, in presenting the Author to the public in another garb, to produce, as far as possible, the same impression on the English mind, which the

original work is calculated to make on the German.

He is fully sensible of the difficulty of translation, and conscious of the great loss which a writer must sustain in having his ideas transferred into a different language; but if, with the absence of his elegance and power of expression, the meaning of the Author has in any case not been conveyed, it must be attributed to the fault, not to the intention of the Translator.

This small volume comprises the whole of that to which Dr. Krummacher refers in his Preface, with the exception of one discourse, namely, "The Temptation of Christ in the Wilderness," which he states to be a short abridgment of a course of Sermons delivered to his people in the vale of Barmen.' That brief Treatise, as it may be termed, does not appear necessarily to form a part of his design as expressed in the title-page, and, from its nature and construction, it differs in various respects from the rest of the work.

Should this effort be made effectual, through the blessing of God, for the spiritual good of any of those to whom Dr. Krummacher can speak only through the medium of a translation, the highest wish and earnest desire of the translator, with regard to the publication, will be abundantly gratified.

THE TRANSLATOR.

*West Cowes,
September, 1837.*

NOTICE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

THE Translator has gladly availed himself of the opportunity afforded by the demand for a New Edition of this Work, carefully to revise the whole: he has in some instances endeavoured to elucidate and otherwise improve the text. "The Temptation of Christ in the Wilderness," omitted in the former impression, but subsequently published by itself, is included in the present Volume. Some passages have been altered, in which a degree of speculation was indulged, the result of a luxuriant imagination, but which might not be deemed suitable for general readers in this country.

*West Cowes,
December, 1837.*

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A G L A N C E
INTO
THE KINGDOM OF GRACE.

SERMON I.

A MOTHER'S LOVE, OR THE TENDER COMPASSION
OF OUR GOD.

ISAIAH xlix. 14—16.

“But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands: thy walls are continually before me.”

TRULY, the Lord loveth the gates of Zion. Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. Behold a fruit tree near a fountain, from whence thousands of weary pilgrims in every age, have gathered golden fruits, and it flourishes, and blossoms, and is still richly laden. O let every troubled soul draw near, and partake of this heavenly manna.

Three things here demand our attention—

I. The building of Zion.

II. The mournful complaint of the daughter of Zion, and

III. The assurance of God's love to his afflicted children.

These shall be the subjects of our meditation.

I.

THE BUILDING OF ZION.

Go round about Zion, mark well her bulwarks, and consider the towers thereof. Zion is the city of the living God,—the church, the tabernacle, or building of which St. Peter speaks, when he addresses those that are born of water and of the Holy Ghost, and says, “Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house.” (1 Pet. ii. 5.) Such is a full and comprehensive representation of the church of God.

Do you inquire respecting the *Great Master Builder*? The Creator of all things is the founder of the church. Its builder and maker is God. Before the world was called into being, its design was minutely portrayed, in all its beautiful proportions, in the counsels of the Eternal. The height, and breadth, and length of God's building were accurately defined; the period within which it should be perfected was determined; the stones were all numbered, and the places specified whence they should be obtained. Nearly six thousand years have elapsed since God begun the spiritual building, and yet it is still in progress, and in perfect accordance with the original design. It is the work of God alone.

We are only instruments which he employs ; all the glory is his. He shall build the temple of the Lord ; and he shall bear the glory. (Zech. vi. 12, 13.) He is jealous for the honour of his name.

Do you ask respecting the *foundation* of the church ? St. Paul has furnished us with the answer : “ Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” (1 Cor. iii. 11.) The incarnate God is the foundation. If trust be reposed in any other Saviour than “ the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world ;” (John i. 29,) if the suretyship of blood be wanting, it is “ no house of the Lord.” The true church is based upon Christ ; but not upon him with whom the world can find no fault ; nor upon him whom an infidel and atheistical philosophy can tolerate ; but it rests upon that crucified Saviour who is to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness, but to them that are called, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. (1 Cor. i. 23, 24.)

And what is *the building itself* ? It consists of stones, yea, of living stones. (1 Pet. ii. 5.) Stones, indeed, are we all by nature, gravitating earthwards, cleaving to the dust, hard, cold, lifeless. How many of you have sat for years, unmoved alike by tenderness or wrath ? The rain and dew have fallen from heaven ; the sun has shone in his brightness ; the awful storm of thunder and lightning has passed over you ; and yet you remain unfeeling, obdurate, unchanged. Is not this like the stone, like the rock of flint ? But, thanks be unto God, there is one who can, of these stones, raise up children unto Abraham. (Matt. iii. 9.)

It is even these hard and unyielding materials that God has selected for the building of the spiritual tem-

ple, that the greatness of his power may be made manifest. He chose not the angels and the heavenly host ; He chose not the legions of devils, and the fallen morning stars ; but the spiritually dead, miserable, and helpless children of Adam ; these are the quarry from whence he collects the stones, with which to raise the walls of Zion.

And as the building is the Lord's, so is *the separation of the stones from the quarry*. His servants, the ministers of the Gospel, have power to loosen no stone ; for he speaks the word by their mouth ; he directs the stroke where it shall fall. "My word," saith the Lord, "is as the hammer, and as the fire which breaketh in pieces the rocks."

God's methods in effecting this great work are not uniform, but various. Some are loosened gradually and gently, after long preparation, as Mary, Lazarus, and Martha. Others are forcibly severed ; then is the work more speedy, and also more perceptible, as Peter, and Nicodemus. Others are rent as by a flash of lightning, like Paul on his way to Damascus, or the jailor at Philippi : there is a clap of thunder, and at once the stone is set free.

But when may it be said that the stone is loosened ? It is at that moment, my brethren, when the man, by the Spirit of God becomes conscious that he is a miserable sinner, utterly lost, and is led to repentance. Then is he separated from the quarry. God has taken him thence, and he is altogether changed ; differing from the stones which remain in the quarry, he has become a living stone, and is awakened to recollection and calling upon God. He is now formed and polished by the hand of the builder, and laid upon the

wall of the spiritual temple, being united to Christ the foundation, by a living faith, by a faith of the operation of God. (Col. ii. 12.)

If we examine the building more narrowly, we shall discover *a remarkable similarity in the living stones* of which it is composed. Collected from the various nations of the earth both savage and cultivated, and diverse from each other in kind and quality, as soon as they occupy the place assigned them in the spiritual temple, all diversity ceases, and they severally form a constituent part of that magnificent edifice, which is distinguished for uniformity of execution no less than unity of design, and in the harmony and beauty of whose several parts, the glory of the Lord is specially made manifest. They are all sprinkled with the same blood, all renewed by the same Spirit : and though to themselves they appear utterly unworthy, they are, in the eyes of God, pure as the lily, and whiter than the snow. They are a lowly, contrite people, sojourners in Mesheck, (Ps. cxx. 5.) pilgrims of God, who have here no continuing city, but seek one that is to come. (Heb. xiii. 14.) In the world they have tribulation, but in Christ they have peace : (John xvi. 33.) they long and “wait for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of their body,” (Rom. viii. 23.) and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. They have “one faith, one hope, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in them all. (Eph. iv. 5.) Herein is the unity of the true church. Jerusalem is a city that is at unity in itself. (Psalms cxxii. 3 ; cxxxiii. 1.)

One in spiritual life ; *the gifts and graces of the members of Christ are manifold and diversified.* “Behold,” saith the Lord, to his church, “I will lay thy stones

with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires ; and I will make thy windows of agate, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones." (Isaiah liv. 11.) They are all precious stones ; but one, in whom hope predominates, may be compared to an emerald ; a second is distinguished for love ; he is a ruby : in a third we are struck by the prevalence of a child-like simplicity and humility ; he is a sapphire ; a fourth is a transparent crystal, shining in wisdom and knowledge. One is contemplative and intellectual ; another active and laborious. One is a babe, another a young man, a third is a father in Christ. Various as are the means by which they are brought nigh to God, yet they are all one in Christ Jesus. And "all this worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that body, being many, are one body ; so also is Christ. For by one spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free ; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." (1 Cor. xii. 1—13.)

One Spirit works in all, and, as He wills,
Gives varied gifts on either hand ;
But when each stone its place allotted fills,
The temple shall completed stand ;

Glorious amidst the city of our God !
There shine those gems of many a hue,
Thus shall his church appear—his saints' abode,
Who seemed so mean to mortal view.

II.

THE MOURNFUL COMPLAINT OF THE DAUGHTER
OF ZION.

The Lord loveth the gates of Zion. But how deeply and how tenderly he loves her, she appears not to know; or why does she utter this *mournful complaint*, "The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me." O Zion, weep rather for thyself. If thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God.

Visitations of calamity or of judgment may indeed be sent, under which nothing would be more appropriate than such a complaint. When, at the time of Noah, the whole world stood in hostile array against the Lord and against his anointed, and all, with the exception of a single family, were overwhelmed in one common and universal destruction; or when, both in Israel and Judah, the seed of Abraham revolted from Jehovah, and the knees of his elect people bowed before the altars of Moloch and of Baal; or when the haughty king of Babylon trampled with the iron shoe of war the ruined fragments of Salem's towers, and the abomination of desolation was set up by Antiochus, on the altar of the Lord, and the holy book of God was torn by profane hands, and cast into the flames; or when, in later days, papal darkness brooded over the church, and obscured the light of heaven; or when, yet darker still, a godless illuminator dared to mock, as "the crucified,"

the Lord of lords—ah! who then would chide the daughter of Zion because she hung her harp upon the willows, and clothed herself in mourning as a widow, and gave utterance to that melancholy cry, “The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me?”

And what is thy state in these our days, thou daughter of Israel? Thou standest upon thy watch-tower, and lookest round upon thy palaces, and behold they are rich and glorious. On all sides thou hearest again the loud acclamations of Hosannah, Hosannah to Him that cometh in the name of the Lord. Again, there is a witness and a testimony awakened in the land, where there was silence and sorrow—the witness of Him whom thy soul loveth. The blood-red banner of the cross is again unfurled; and showers of blessings descend from the Lord. O take then thy harp from the bough of the willow and utter a song of praise to the Lord, and of defiance to his enemies. But should any one inquire of thee, “What of the night?” then mayest thou answer, not, indeed, without tears, “The morning cometh, and also the night; if ye will inquire, inquire ye, return, come.” Thou regardest thyself still as vile, even as the worm Jacob, and sittest solitary, as a lonely cottage in a vineyard. Thou seest that in a thousand places the ways of Zion mourn, and all her ways are desolate, and her priests sigh and her virgins are afflicted. Thou castest thine eyes upon the countless host of hirelings who continually cause the people to err, and lead them through Golgotha to everlasting destruction. Thou beholdest the millions of wandering sheep which hear not the voice of the good Shepherd, and perish, eternally perish, and no man layeth it to

heart. At the contemplation of this darkness around thee, thy heart is well nigh broken, and the bitter cry bursts from thee again, "The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me."

But if Zion doth not collectively thus complain, yet do I well know that in the hearts of many of the individual citizens of Zion, this lamentation is not silenced. I hearken to you, and hear, O children of God; and O! on every side of me, the heavy sigh escapes from many a heart, "The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me."

There sits a poor weeping penitent, and he smites upon his breast and cries, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" As yet he knows not how to find the arms and heart of the Saviour, and he thinks "the Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me."

Yonder, behold a warrior in the hard conflict against sin and the devil, and as he deals his blows around him, he cannot overcome that creeping serpent, whose heads, when wounded, are continually renewed; and at length the poor soldier of the cross sinks upon the earth, and exclaims, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!"

Here lies a poor soul in the darkness of heavy temptation, agitated and oppressed with fearful doubts, alarming forebodings, and thoughts which cause all his bones to tremble. He doubts respecting his state, he doubts respecting Christ and his love, and the cry impetuously bursts from his heart, "The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me."

There languishes another, who has now, for a long long time, been in the fire of outward tribulation, and

the Lord comes not down to deliver him, and his enemies rejoice over him and say, "Where is now thy God?" and alas! his God does not reveal himself. The footsteps of the Lord are in the great waters, and his head is veiled in the clouds, so that even the friends of this troubled soul begin to say, "If thou wert righteous, God would not thus deal with thee;" and the poor sufferer is dismayed, and cries out in the anguish of his soul, "The Lord hath forsaken me."

And whatever other causes may be assigned, is it not true, beloved heirs of the kingdom, that the melancholy plaint is not unfrequently heard among us, "The Lord hath forgotten me?" From many a heart does it arise, in many a chamber does it become vocal, and on the beds of multitudes of the children of Zion is it uttered, with bitter cries and tears, in the night, when the world is still, and the inhabitants thereof are at rest.

Gather yourselves together, then, ye godly troubled souls, for I speak not to those who have the sorrow of the world; gather yourselves together. Think not that I mean to rebuke you for your unbelief. No! That belongs not to me: for the Lord himself doth not rebuke you. Would you then comfort us? No beloved, not I; for how would that relieve you? But I would direct you to One who is both able and willing to comfort you. Behold! He is none other than the Lord God himself. He has heard your cry; he knows your sorrows; and is come down to deliver you. The bowels of his mercy yearn over you, his weeping children. Behold! Behold him! See the light of his countenance lifted up upon you; the outstretched arms of a

merciful God and loving Father. He has a word to say to you ; fear not. It is a word by which the darkness of your souls shall at once be converted into the brightness of the day.

III.

THE ASSURANCE OF GOD'S LOVE TO HIS AFFLICTED CHILDREN.

“Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands, thy walls are continually before me.”

O, brethren, *what grace, what comfort is here!* Lay these words near your heart: let not one be lost, and say whether they are not full of comfort?

Is it not a great and distinguished privilege to be permitted to fall down before the Almighty in trembling reverence, and to call him our God? And it is yet a greater blessedness to have boldness of access, through Christ, and to be enabled to cry to him in the spirit of adoption, “Abba, Father.”

And mark this well. It is as if God would encourage us to approach him with the confidence which we repose in a mother, and freely, and openly, without any fear

or reserve, to communicate our inmost thoughts and feelings to himself.

A mother's love is therefore set before us, and we are assured that it is but a faint and imperfect emblem of the love of God.

Think, brethren, *of the tender care and anxious solicitude of a mother!* In whose arms does an infant love to rest? In whose heart is the helpless babe enshrined? By whose watchful care is his every want supplied? Is it not a mother's? Who has borne, and carried, and nourished, and fed you? Is it not a mother? Who, my dear little ones, who is it that provides for you, and clothes you? Who corrects you, when needful, and herself suffers more, at such times, than the corrected child? Who comforts you, and gently lays you to rest? O! is it not a mother? What more dost thou desire, thou happy child? Softly lay thy head on the bosom of thy mother, and repose in peace.

And, is it by a mother's love that the Lord describes his own? It is my brethren; and it is to you he speaks, and his voice is to the children of men. Then, then, I have enough. What more do I need to hear? It is enough.—No! my beloved. God has yet more to say to you. He would tell you further *how* it is that he loveth you.

“Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?” Such is the inquiry which the Lord makes. And mark the rising force of the words, which is noticed by many ancient commentators.

Can a woman forget—can she who is pre-eminently

endowed with feeling and affection—can *she* forget her child? The child may be ungrateful and rebellious, but will she, on that account, *forget* him, withdraw from him her love, and banish him from her heart? Never! never—I confidently appeal to you who are mothers.

But, admitting that she may forget her grown-up son, and far distant daughter, will she therefore forget her infant, her tender, helpless, *sucking child*, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? O no! A tiger may forget her young, but not a tender mother.

But to suppose possible that which we acknowledge to be an impossibility—a mother may forget her little child: does it then, of necessity, follow, that she will *not have compassion on the son of her womb?* that she can, without pain, see him languish, and pine away, and die? Ah, no! A mother's eyes that had never wept, would at such a sight become a fountain of tears. And where is the mother that would not, from the heart, cry out, "Alas! my poor, poor child! would that I could suffer for thee, and ease thee of thy pain!"

When, therefore, the Lord inquires, "Can a mother forget her sucking child?" are not all of you, who are mothers, ready with the answer? and do you not reply, with one voice, "No, no! it cannot be!" And so, saith the Lord, will I not forget you, my beloved children. Thus he loveth you with the tenderness of the most tender mother.

But, yet more. Here is not only a mother's tenderness, but *a love beyond that of a mother*. For the Lord does not merely say, I will not forget thee: but

he says, "*yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.*" If that which appears impossible, should indeed take place—a mother may forget her sucking child—yet will not I, the unchangeable, the eternal God, *yet will not I forget thee.* This is strong language. Here is opened before us the deep abyss of love, which the eye of man can never penetrate. And as we have no means to fathom it, so we can form no conception, much less can we give any adequate expression thereof.

O daughter of Zion, canst thou now complain, "the Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me?" Ah! such a cry is not right, it is sin, it is blasphemy. Away with such unworthy complaint. Down in the dust and pray.

And how does the Lord close these words of heavenly comfort? "*Behold I have graven thee on the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me.*" How precious this assurance to Zion at large, as well as to each individual believer!

As an architect who is about to build a city, first lays down the outline, and marks out the spaces required for houses, streets, squares, and palaces, so also hath the Lord delineated his whole plan of the spiritual Zion: and *it is upon the palms of his hands that he hath graven it.* There, in his eternal purpose, doth it stand, finished and adorned in all its splendour: and who can hinder Him from perfecting his great and mighty design? Though the war-cry of the Canaanite and Samaritan may be, "Down with it! Down with it! even to the ground!" yet will the flag of Zion ever wave on its towers of glory. For the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. The

Lord loveth the gates of Zion. *Her walls are continually before him.* With his favour doth he compass her as with a shield.

And as Zion is herself graven upon the palms of His hands, so are each of the citizens thereof. O that every one of you could realize this for yourselves. You are graven there, not in the form which you now bear, not in the body of sin and death which still cleaves to you, (Rom. vii. 24.) but in the similitude of that perfect body in which you shall hereafter be raised in power. (1 Cor. xv. 43.) And whilst you are here suffering in the church militant, and groan, being burdened, (2 Cor. v. 4.) God beholds you already invested with the robes of righteousness, and bearing on high the palms of triumph, and shining in the spotless purity and surpassing brightness of eternal glory. (Rev. vii. 9.) Such as you stand engraven upon his hands, such you shall assuredly be before the throne of the Majesty on high. Nor is there a moment in which, wherever you are, his eyes are not upon you. Know, thou daughter of Zion, that thou art ever *before him.*

Shouldst thou retire into solitude to weep—shouldst thou water thy couch with thy tears—shouldst thou lie, with Elijah, under the lonely juniper tree—or withdraw into the deepest shades of the dark and dreary forest, the tender heart of God is near thee, his watchful eye of love is over thee, and his right hand, though unseen, upholds and strengthens thee.

In whatever state or circumstances thou mayest be, as often as thou sayest, “The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me,” thou speakest not

aright, thou doest thyself much wrong, God knoweth. Ah ! brother, if thine eyes were but once opened, as were the eyes of the servant of the prophet, to see the angels of God that encamp around thee, thou wouldst indeed be astonished.

Away then with needless care ! *Who should be careful that knows the tender love of God !* He forgetteth not his child, his little one, his helpless babe. O no. The child of God may take this comfortable assurance home to his heart.

But are we his children ? You are, brethren, if you can say, that with weeping hearts you seek his grace : that you inwardly delight in the fruit of his Cross ; that, with a contrite spirit, you desire nothing more earnestly than to be washed in the blood of Jesus. Then are you the children of God : and, though you are not yet able to rejoice in the full assurance of your adoption into the family of heaven, and as yet are not conscious of being the objects of the tender love of your God ; nevertheless, believe in that love. The time for sensible experience is not far distant. God would delight to lead us in a smoother and more pleasant path than he is ordinarily wont to lead us, did not our salvation demand it otherwise.

But, look well to it, dear brethren, each for himself, that you do not groundlessly trust in the love and mercy of our God. It is to Zion only that God speaks in my text. And it is not fasting and prayer, it is not works and deservings, which bring us within the bonds of this covenant of grace and love ; it is a poor, broken, and contrite heart, a troubled spirit, and a soul sighing and looking to the Cross of Jesus.

The “Lord, remember me,” of the thief upon the cross—the “God be merciful to me a sinner,” which bursts from the heart of the penitent, as, led by the Spirit, he bends in lowly reverence before the Lamb of God offered in sacrifice—such a prayer alone rends the heavens, such a prayer finds its way, through our Advocate, to the heart of the Father ; it is the key of the sanctuary. O that God may give it to you all for Jesus Christ’s sake.

Amen.

SERMON II.

THE CAMP OF JUDAH.

NUMB. ii. 3.

“And on the east side, toward the rising of the sun, shall they of the standard of the camp of Judah pitch throughout their armies : and Nahshon, the son of Amminadab, shall be captain of the children of Judah.”

THIS chapter is entitled the order of the tribes in their tents. It informs us how they encamped on their way to Canaan ; but it has also a further signification. For this people was a type of the spiritual Israel, and all God's dealings with them had a reference to greater things to come. All were allegorical prophetic, significant—shadows of those things of which the substance is to be found in the kingdom of Christ.

This remark applies not only to the whole multitude collectively, but, individually, to the tribes of which it was composed. Thus, in the words before us, we are taught the manner in which the people of God are encamped in the present day.

Let us draw near, that we may behold more clearly this lovely sight. We will observe,

- I. The tribe of Judah.
- II. His camp.
- III. The position of his camp.
- IV. His standard.
- V. His army.
- VI. His captain.

And may the Spirit of the Lord direct our meditations aright.

I.

THE TRIBE OF JUDAH.

It is generally understood that the tribe of Judah was *a representation of the New Testament Church*, which is not unfrequently designated by the term Judah. Thus it is said by the Prophet Joel, "Judah shall dwell for ever." (Joel iii. 20.) And Zechariah foretells that "the Lord shall inherit Judah, his portion in the holy land." (Zech. ii. 12.) A similar allusion is contained in the blessing of Jacob, "Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise." (Gen. xlix. 8.)

And indeed, *Judah possesses every qualification requisite to set forth the reality of the spiritual church.* Was Judah the most distinguished tribe which gave to all Israel a race of kings? Behold here is an elect people, a people who are all kings and priests, and whose sceptre shall govern all the inhabitants of the earth. (Rev. i. 6.) Was Judah the tribe in which the second Adam was born? Behold, here is the woman clothed with the Sun, who by the power of the Spirit, and the witness of the word, bringeth forth a man-child, even Christ, who is to rule all nations with a rod of iron. (Rev. xii. 1—5.) Was Judah the tribe which dwelt on Mount

Zion, in Jerusalem, and, bore in its bosom the sanctuary of God? Behold, here are the royal priesthood, the citizens of the heavenly Zion, themselves the habitation of God by the Spirit. The holy fire is preserved among them, and the glory of the Lord filleth the house. This then is the true Judah.

The name Judah signifies praise. Now, said his mother at his birth, will I praise the Lord, and thence his name. So also is the spiritual Judah appointed and ordained for the praises of Him, who hath called him out of darkness into his marvellous light. Even when silent, there ascends from his tabernacles the sacrifice of praise. For what was once the state of those who are now so highly honoured? Were they not as firebrands snatched from the burning, and though now a holy nation, and peculiar people, were they not once without God and without Christ in the world?

The golden harps which they bear in their hands, were placed there by the God of Jacob, and though fellow heirs with the holy angels, and inheritors of the glory that shall be revealed, their desert was the misery and despair of the devil and his angels, in the blackness of darkness for ever.

Well may this people be called Judah, a praise to the Lord, for it is a living monument of the power and grace of Christ, more glorious than the fabric of the world, a people that he hath formed for himself, they shall show forth his praise. (Isa. xliii. 21.) He esteems them as his peculiar treasure. They are a "crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of their God." (Isa. lxii. 3.) "They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I

make up my jewels ; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his son that serveth him." (Mal. iii. 17.)

Their names are borne on the breast-plate of the Great High Priest into the Holy of holies, and when at length the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and every eye shall see him, he shall come attended by this people, they shall encircle him as a guard of honour, they shall sit on his throne, and with him judge the world. They are made for the praise of the glory of his grace, and thence they are termed Judah, that is, praise. Such are the people of whom we speak.

But let it be observed, that *we have not here to do with that Judah who dwelt at peace among the hills of Zion*, and on the shores of the Jordan, and sat beneath his own vine and fig-tree, none daring to make him afraid ; but our text refers to that Judah, who, abroad upon his march, amid the sound of trumpet and the clang of war, pitched his camp in the barren wilderness, and thought of battle and of strife.

And the spiritual Judah in this world has much more resemblance to a people so circumstanced, than to such as were in the full enjoyment of peace within the borders of the promised land. For they are enlisted under the banner of the cross, nor shall their warfare be accomplished till they at length attain the crown. (Rev. ii. 10.)

Truly they have more adversaries than Midian and Amalek. *Many are the principalities and powers which stand opposed to them in hostile array.* They have enemies in the air, (Eph. ii. 2 ; vi. 12.) and on the earth ; (Eph. iv. 14.) enemies in the house, (Matt. x. 36.) in the heart, Mark vii. 21—23.) and in the members ; (Jas. iv. 1.) enemies in the tumult

of the world, (Mark x. 17—25 ; Acts iv. 25—30.) and in the solitary chamber ; (Matt. iv. 1.) and on all sides they are beset with ambuscades and snares, and hidden mines. Thus, therefore, of necessity, must they ever stand ready armed. (Psal. lvii. 6 ; Prov. xxix. 5.)

The Judah of former days was divided into several companies, each of which had its peculiar equipments. And it is the same in spiritual things.

As there is a diversity in form and outward circumstance, in complexion and character, and spiritual experience, so is there *a difference in the weapons which they wield.*

The defence of some are *tears*, as it is with a child, who, on the appearance of danger, runs weeping to his mother. This is a band of combatants, who, when they are weak, then are they strong, and so one victory is followed by another.

Others protect themselves after the manner of a virgin, with holy *shame-facedness* and modesty. Scarcely is the temptation presented, when the heart starts back with trembling apprehension ; “How shall I do this great wickedness and sin against God ?” (Gen. xxxix. 9.) and Joseph is rescued.

A third class is skilled in *the Word of God*. “It is written,” is their sword and shield under every assault ; and then, “Get thee hence, Satan, for thou savourest not of the things that be of God.” (Matt. iv. 10.)

With *sighs and cries* to God do others prevail, as Moses, in the conflict with Amalek, when Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands towards heaven, and Amalek

and his people were discomfited with the edge of the sword. (Exod. xvii. 12.)

Or *the cross is lifted up* on high, and one look is directed to the bleeding victim hanging on the tree, and the storm in the members is hushed, and Satan launches his weapons in vain.

The spiritual combatants are strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. They put on the whole armour of God, that they may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For they wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore they take unto them the whole armour of God, that they may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand. They stand, therefore, having their loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of righteousness, and their feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace ; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith they are able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And they take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance (Eph. vi. 10—18.)

The Lord himself is their rock and their fortress, and their deliverer ; their God, their strength, in whom they will trust ; their buckler and the horn of their salvation, and their high tower. (Psal. xviii. 2.)

Relying on the thousand promises which are graven on the Rock of ages, they know and are fully assured that no enemy can do them harm.

Wherever they encounter the adversary, they resist him with firmness, and deride his power, and they rejoice in the fulfilment of the promises of God, which are all yea and amen in Christ Jesus. (2 Cor. i. 20.)

As the weapons are various which are used against the flesh and the devil, so are those also which are opposed to scorers and blasphemers.

In the camp of Judah one fights with the transfixing arrows of *meekness and love*, blessing him that curses, and heaping coals of fire upon his head.

To another is given a *holy conversation* and heavenly example, to stay the tongue of slander.

A third ensures success by a *simplicity and gentleness* which confounds and perplexes the enemy.

And thus, by such-like weapons, taken from the spiritual armoury, we prevail ; though we walk after the flesh, we do not war after the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds ; casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God. (2 Cor. x. 3—5.) Nor is there a sword, or shield, or spear, or other instrument of war, found in the camp of Judah, which is not furnished by HIM who is given for a leader and commander to the people, the Captain of the Lord's host, the Captain of our salvation. (Isa. lv. 4 ; Jos. v. 15 ; Heb. ii. 10.)

II.

THE CAMP OF JUDAH.

“ On the east side, toward the rising of the sun, shall they of the standard of the camp of Judah pitch throughout their armies.”

Behold, then, this people in their camp. The Lord of Hosts is with them ! the God of Jacob is their refuge. (Psal. xlv. 7.) And underneath are the everlasting arms ; and he shall thrust out the enemy from before them, and shall say, Destroy them. (Deut. xxxiii. 27.)

But was it always so ? Did the spiritual Judah, at all times, dwell in the secret place of the Most High, and abide under the shadow of the Almighty ! (Psal. xci. 1.) No, brethren. *A time was when they were without ;* (1 Cor. v. 13.) and though exposed to dangers and destitute of help, they thought that they were safe. In fancied power, and imaginary goodness, they boasted of their state. But now the hand of grace has subdued their haughty spirit, and bowed to the earth their crown of pride. Now they lie in the dust, weak, and poor, and destitute, and say, “ In the Lord have I righteousness and strength.” (Isa. xlv. 24.) They encamp ; they march ; they fight ; they conquer. Poor in spirit, and ever deeply sensible of their own unworthiness, they cast themselves at the feet of Jesus. And should any one of them attempt to quit the camp of Judah, to lift up or exalt himself, he hears the voice of Jesus, calling him to return, and his former position is resumed. (Isa. xxx. 21 ; John xii. 26.)

Down, therefore, to these depths must you all come who *trust in a righteousness of your own, and boast in a crown which your own hands have formed.* (Jer. ix. 24 ; 1 Cor.

i. 31.) There are no such vain confidences in Judah. They do, indeed, glory ; but it is in the Lord they glory. (2 Cor. x. 17.) Their crown is *the crown of thorns*, which encircled the brow of their King in the common hall of Pilate. (Matt. xxvii. 27.) Their robe of righteousness is *the garment dyed with blood*, which their Lord was content to wear for their salvation. (Isa. lxiii. 1.)

And ye who weary yourselves in the pursuit of human merit, that you may be your own saviours, and seek, by good works, to atone for your past transgressions ; O come down from your heights, and take your station with the princely but lowly Judah. For Judah casts his crown upon the ground, the crown of life which the Saviour gives him ; he lays his forehead on the footstool of the throne of grace, and is accepted in the Beloved. (Rev. iv. 4, 10 ; Eph. i. 6.)

The camp of Judah is pitched. *It is not pleasing to the Lord that this people should consume their time in vain and fruitless labours.* It is his will that they should rest in the enjoyment of the blessings which were purchased by the agony and bloody sweat, by the cross and passion of the Saviour. The feast is prepared for them ; the time is come ; all things are ready ; nothing is required but to partake of the bounties so amply provided. (Matt. xxii. 4.)

Happy then is our state in the camp of God. *We may rest in peace, for thou, Lord, only causest us to dwell in safety.* Do we hear from afar the rushing of the storm ? We learn to rejoice more in the serenity which pervades the camp of Judah. Do we hear, without, the war-cry of the enemy ? Our souls are thus taught to delight in the voice of peace, (Eph. ii. 13—15.) which pro-

ceeds from the cross of Jesus. (Heb. xii. 24.) Do we hear at a distance the raging of hell? We compare it with the quiet of our own habitations, and give praise to God. Are we roused in our contemplation of future things by the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, summoning the world to judgment? We hear it with joy, for the more dreadful the things that must be hereafter, the sweeter our feeling of security in the knowledge of reconciliation. For, whoever has prostrated himself on the ground with Jesus in Gethsemane, and with the worm has become a worm, shall certainly also partake with him of this rich and abiding portion.

But how is Judah encamped? In the form described by the wave-offering, namely, the form of the cross. (See Numb. viii. 11. marginal reading.) A most significant emblem! For the people of God are saved by the cross. They cling to the cross of the Redeemer, as to the plank which can rescue them from shipwreck. They rest upon the cross as the alone foundation of their spiritual life, of their hopes, their joys, and prospects. And whosoever is without the cross can claim no place in the camp of Judah.

But where are the resting places of this favoured people? They dwell in a camp. *In camps there are no fixed habitations*, but only tabernacles and tents, which are speedily and without difficulty pitched and taken down. And it is well that it is so, for the children of Judah must always hold themselves in readiness to march. They are but wanderers and sojourners in the world. The feeling that they are such, should ever pervade their soul, and direct and control their plans and operations. Theirs is the most happy condition

upon earth. Occupying for a season a temporary habitation, with hearts set free from earthly entanglements, they confess that they are strangers and pilgrims on the earth, and declare plainly that they seek a better country, that is, a heavenly. (Heb. xi. 13—16.) Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city. (1 Cor. ix. 29—31.) And thus those that have wives are as though they had none, and they that weep as though they wept not, and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not, and they that buy as though they possessed not, and they that use this world as not abusing it, for the fashion of this world passeth away. And they know that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in them. (Rom. viii. 18.) And though weeping may endure for a night, joy cometh in the morning. (Psal. xxx. 5.) Here they have no continuing city, but they seek one to come. (Heb. xiii. 14.)

O, how happy are they who have learnt, as travellers, to press onward to their much loved home, only seeking shelter for the night under a transient covert by the way! This is acquired only in the school of Christ.

And as external objects affect so little the follower of Jesus, (for he looks not at the things which are seen and temporal, but at the things which are not seen and eternal) so is it not to be expressed how firm is the hold which the anchor of his hope takes within the veil. ONE only knows, He who will shortly conduct his people to their rest, to the haven where they would be. O, happy art thou, Judah in thy tents, and in thy dwellings by the way!

III.

THE POSITION OF THE CAMP OF JUDAH.

Judah pitched “on the east side toward the rising of the sun.” There is something animating and joyous in this description—on the east side, toward the rising sun—the evening behind them, the morning full in view. And observe, that from *the child upwards to the grey-headed, all in Judah look to the east, to the sun-rising*. Where the Rose of Sharon blooms, where the Root of David sends forth its shoots out of a dry and thirsty ground, and the chief of the host of stars arises in splendour over the night, thither do they direct their looks—their thoughts.

Now the hill of Bethlehem is tipped before them from afar with glowing light, and they hear, with transported soul, the song of the angels. Now they stand upon the shore, and rejoice in *Him*, to whom the wind and the waves yield a ready obedience. At one time, they build a tabernacle with Peter on the mountain of the transfiguration, and dream dreams, and see visions of glorious things which shall be hereafter. At another time, they visit Jesus in the lowly cabin of the carpenter, their brother, in the form of a servant, and they adore His condescension in becoming so closely related to them, and exclaim with tears, “Brother! O my Brother!” And now they enter into the darkness of Gethsemane, and with trembling reverence eagerly catch the bloody sweat which drops from the forehead of their Lord and Saviour, and the wounds of their souls begin to feel its healing power. Then the mount

of the crucifixion arises before the view. The soul expands its wings, and on the cross of the dying penitent, adopts his prayer, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom," and draws upon itself the same blessing, "Verily, I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." (Luke xxiii. 42, 43.) Behold, the stone is rolled back from the sepulchre in the garden of Joseph! Praise, O praise the Lord. The Lion of the tribe of Judah hath prevailed. He hath arisen victorious over death and the grave. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. And now the glories of the rising morn are shed on the heights of Olivet. The soul mounts upwards. She sees heaven opened, and God is gone up with a shout; the Lord with the sound of a trumpet. Sing praises to God, sing praises, sing praises unto our king, sing praises. (Psal. xlvii. 5, 6.) She breathes the air of paradise. She spreads abroad her wings, and would fain ascend with the bridegroom to the chamber where the marriage feast is prepared, and would leave for ever the earth and earthly things.

Thus, my brethren, doth Judah fix his gaze upon the opening glories of the morning. Thus is he encamped towards the east. *Soon will the Sun of Righteousness arise as a bridegroom out of his chamber, with healing in his wings.* Already on every side, among Christians, the heathen, and the Jews, has the harbinger of day announced His near approach. Already the dawn appears and the eastern heavens are tinged with red, and the vapours which foretel the coming day, the mists of uproar and confusion which arise from the

camp of the enemy, are dispersed as with the breath of a whirlwind.

He will come. The day-star from on high will visit us. The bride longs for his appearing? "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." He will come.—The prince of the kings of the earth in the clouds of heaven, and will soon bring to an end the rage of his embittered enemies, and will establish the mountain of the Lord's house in the top of the mountains, and exalt it above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it. (Isa. ii. 2, 5.) O house of Jacob, come ye and let us walk in the light of the Lord. For our camp is pitched on the east side toward the rising of the sun. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. We already inhale the air of the morning, hoping, believing, looking upwards.

Behold then, on the east side, toward the rising sun, is Judah encamped. *Thither tends his soul*, and as he gazes with longing and intense delight, his eyes fill with tears, they fail with looking upward, and oppressed with the exceeding weight of glory, he sighs for the time when mortality shall be swallowed up of life.

Walk about Zion, and go round about her, tell the towers thereof, mark ye well her bulwarks, consider *her palaces, all look toward the east*. (Psal. xlviii. 12, 13.) Glorious as is the dwelling-place of the Lord among men, it bears no comparison to that which shall be hereafter. If there was a glory, in the earthly temple, when the brightness of the Messiah was concealed by the veil of mortality, will it not be more strikingly made manifest in the world to come? And may not a further accomplishment of the promise be yet anticipated? "For thus saith the Lord of hosts, Yet

once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land, and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come, and I will fill the house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts." (Hag. ii. 6, 7.) "The glory of the latter house shall be greater than that of the former, saith the Lord of hosts." (Hag. ii. 9.) The great Melchizedec, the king of Salem, the king of peace shall reign there. For there shall be a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth shall pass away. And the holy city, the new Jerusalem, shall come down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And a great voice out of heaven shall say, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things will have passed away, and, behold, he that sitteth upon the throne will make all things new. And he said unto me, write, for these words are true and faithful. (Rev. xxi. 1—5.)

The pilgrim looks, therefore, towards the rising of the sun. He waits for the morning. To behold this is his desire in this dark and desolate world. He longs for his peaceful home, among the dwellings of the blessed. He *thinks upon the morning of the eternal sabbath*, and cries with David, "as the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" (Psal. xlii. 1.)

Some in the camp of Judah are children of sorrow. They are encompassed by doubts, and sit in darkness, yet their window is ever open towards the east, hoping that the morning will quickly appear, that morning whose brightness and splendour no night can obscure. Others, beset by a thousand obstacles, would never know another happy hour, did they not perceive with the eye of expectation, through the confused imagery around them, the dawning of that day of which the poet speaks,

As dreams shall seem the pilgrim's fears;
Great day; when thy bright morn appears.

Others, whilst bowed down with grief they follow the remains of a beloved one to the grave, though weeping, may rejoice for their eye, rests upon the dawning of that morning which will unite all the saints in one indissoluble bond of union.

Yes; go to the chambers of the afflicted children of God; visit their bed of suffering; see the brother of Job, the sister of Lazarus, and you may well ask, how they are capable of sustaining their calamities, and whence are derived the peace and serenity which beam in their eyes. But know, that to the upright there ariseth a light in the darkness, there shineth over them from afar the effulgence of a morning, such as the world never saw; an eternal Sabbath, a blessed jubilee, with thousand crowns and thousand glories; and by faith they behold Jesus himself, the Light of the world, the source of their present and everlasting joy. They are encamped on the east side, toward the rising of the sun. And it is as though they already heard the cheerful notes of the herald of the day, and as though the

morning breeze wafted its freshness through their window, and the early dawn gladdened their chambers. O, praise, praise the Lord. The night is far spent, the day is at hand.

Judah is pitched on the east side, toward the rising sun. Such also is the position of *the Saints*, who, having been called to their rest, *are sleeping in Jesus*. The sacred dust of those who were once the temple of the Holy Ghost, the habitation of God, through the Spirit, is precious in His sight, and He guards it as his treasure. Whilst the bodies of the just lie in the silent tomb, their souls are happy with Jesus ; but ere long, when the morning of the Resurrection will dawn, the Spirit of the Lord will breathe upon them, and the voice of the Archangel and the trump of God will awaken them from their long night of slumber. At length they shall arise, invested with a radiance and glory inexpressible, and the soul and body again being united, they shall enter as the blessed of the Father into the joy of their Lord—a praise to the Redeemer throughout the ages of eternity. “Thy dead men shall live ; together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust, for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.” (Isa. xxvi. 19.)

Yes, thou people of Judah, thou art indeed blessed. Wait patiently but a little. Thy morning sun will soon arise. O sing, then, one of the songs of Zion.

I sigh for home, and feel a stranger
Here, where all is drear and cold ;
Shelter me soon from storms and danger
In thy warm and peaceful fold.

Soon, very soon, thy mourning will be turned into joy. The sighs which issue from the tabernacles of the Pilgrims to Zion are heard in heaven.

I sigh for home, in twilight pining ;
Grant me soon, thou Prince of Light,
Thy face to see, in glory shining,
In those realms where all is bright.

Thy mansions are already prepared in thy Father's house above. Tarry but a while on the hill of expectation. Behold the Lord will come quickly. He will not disappoint thy hope.

I sigh for home—my spirit panteth
After Thee, O God of Love ;
Give me the joys for which it fainteth,
Unite me to thyself above.

Silent and unobserved, the dawning of the day will speedily appear, and, before thou art aware, that Sun will arise which at once and for ever will turn thy darkness into light.

IV.

THE STANDARD OF THE CAMP OF JUDAH.

“Every man of the children of Israel shall pitch his own standard with the ensign of their father's house.”
(Numb. ii. 2.)

After the position of the Camp of Judah is stated, mention is made of *his standard*.

Judah had his own peculiar banner, cruciform, with a transverse piece of wood above. His colour was red, as ancient tradition relates, with the figure of a Lion on the field. It was, therefore, *the type of the Christian standard, the cross of a crucified Saviour.*

Flags were used to give signals to the host for the pitching of the camp, and other military operations. They were wont to be set up on the mountains and hills, that they might be seen afar, and forthwith the army collected around them.

And it is even so with the banner of the cross. *It is that which the Father makes use of to draw all men unto Him.* Wherever it is unfurled, there is a moving, there is a going to and fro, there is a rushing and a hastening forward, and the elect of God flow to it with rejoicing or with tears.

Here we behold men, whom the humiliation of the manger could not affect, and the throne of the Majesty on High failed to alarm, whom the consideration of their everlasting welfare could not allure, nor the thought of eternal destruction impel to seek the salvation of their soul—And behold! the cross of Christ in a moment breaks their heart, and the crown of thorns pierces their soul, and the reed given in mockery to the Son of God strikes them to the ground, and the blood, which trickles from the accursed tree, softens and dissolves, as with the power of fire, the heart of stone.

And tell me, where do the Rahabs and the Magdalens become the chaste spouse of Christ; where do the aged Simeons and Hannahs rejoice in the vigour of youth; where are the Sauls breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the saints of the Lord, converted into

devoted priests of the Most High ; and where do the strong ones become a prey to the Lord ? Is it not where the word of the cross is proclaimed, and the banner of the cross is unfurled, and the power of the cross is experienced ?

This is the standard which is lifted up, and draws all men unto it. Yea, it is the centre, around which myriads of happy spirits in heaven and on earth are day and night collected in holy love and brotherhood. For here alone, beneath this banner, is life.

When an army is deprived of its standard, it is indeed a great loss, it is a disgrace, and almost worse than a defeat. Our enemies are aware of this, and what is there that they more desire, than to wrest the ensign from our hands. A holy Saviour, a divine Saviour, a princely Saviour, an exalted and glorified Saviour—such an one they would leave with us a thousand times, could they but rob us of HIM that was crucified. It is against Him that all their arrows of scorn and derision are directed. To cause us to disesteem and contemn such a Saviour—this is all their endeavour. Brethren, they would tear from us the banner of our faith, the flag to which we have sworn fidelity ; need I exhort you to die rather than suffer this, and lose your hope of heaven.

The ensign precedes the host, and so does the cross conduct the army of God in their heavenward progress. It is a crucified Saviour whom they follow, and a look to his cross is their strength and security. Should they, in following him, encounter the storms and fury of the elements—they look to the cross. That look inspires courage and confirms the heart in patient endurance. Is their pathway dark and dreary ? They

look to the cross. The rays of the Saviour's glory shine to them from thence. Darkness is made light before them, and crooked things straight, and they are refreshed and comforted. Are they exposed to the covert and insidious attacks, or to the more vigorous and determined onset of their numerous enemies? They look to the cross. And whether the power of temptation be from without or from within, from a corrupt and evil nature, or from the world, the flesh, and the devil, they are at once assured, by the effects which follow, that the battle is the Lord's, and he will give them the victory. Should sin alarm, or their heart condemn them—they look to the cross. God is greater than their hearts, and knoweth all things. He knoweth that they trust in that Saviour who finished the transgression and made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness; that they repose their faith on Him who died and rose again, and ever liveth to make intercession for them. And they confidently adopt the language of the apostle, and say, "who can lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" since God, the triune Jehovah, acquits and justifies. Who can condemn whom God hath not condemned? There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. And when to triumph over their last, their dreaded enemy, they pass through the valley of the shadow of death, amid the gloom and silence of their dreary pilgrimage, (for no human friend is near to help or encourage them,) they look to the cross. That friend is near, who sticketh closer than a brother. They fear no evil, his rod and his staff they comfort them. And finally, when they stand before the awful seat of

judgment—they look to the cross, and *because* that banner has gone before them to notify their approach as soldiers of the cross, the king will hold out to them the golden sceptre, and the glorified saints and angels will welcome their arrival. Such is the power of the banner of the cross. It brings us safely through, where without it there is no way. It breaks the brazen bolts and iron doors, and cuts a path through the flinty rocks, and over the hills which touch the heavens.

When a warrior falls on the battle field, it is a mark of distinguished honour if the flag is thrown over him, and he is covered in its sacred folds. And thus it is with thee, O Judah. Shouldst thou be stricken to the ground and faint in the conflict, the bloody banner shall float over thee and protect thee, and bring thee to honour. And when at length thou shalt die, die beneath the shade of this ensign, die under the covering of this red-stained standard of the camp. Thus *abide* as a good soldier. Be thou faithful unto death, and HE will give thee a crown of life.

V.

THE ARMIES OF JUDAH.

O, beloved brethren, how should we be astonished, what trembling delight would seize upon us, if but once the protecting host, by which the spiritual Israel is surrounded, should burst the veil which hides them from our view, and render themselves visible. To some it has been permitted to behold, with their mortal eyes, these unseen attendants of the heirs of salvation. Jacob beheld them, after his departure from Laban. As he went on his way, the angels of God met him.

And when Jacob saw them, he said this is God's host ; and he called the name of that place Mahanaim, that is, two hosts or camps. (Gen. xxxii. 1, 2.) The servant of Elisha was enabled to see the armies of heaven, when the king of Syria sent horses and chariots, and a great army to Dothan ; "and they came by night and compassed the city about, and when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold an host compassed the city, both with horses and chariots, and his servant said unto him, alas, my master, what shall we do ? And he answered, fear not, for they that be with us, are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord I pray thee, open his eyes that he may see ; and the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw : and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." (2 Kings vi. 14—17.)

The army of Judah is the heavenly choir of guardian angels, all ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation. They are the mighty ones, who with golden harps surround the throne of the Majesty on high, and behold the face of the Ancient of Days in glory. They are the blessed messengers which wing their way from heaven, and visit the habitations of the children of men on earth, and take back a report of their deeds to the presence of the Father. They are the holy angels who, around the throne of Jehovah, await his high commands, hearkening to the voice of his word ; who, swifter than the rushing storm or flash of heaven, urge their impetuous flight to help and protect the elect of God.

These blessed visitants are present in the congrega-

tion of the saints, and go in and out of the city of God in this lower world, to mingle with our children in their simple pleasures and keep them from harm ; to warn our youths of their danger, and conduct them in the right way ; to encourage and excite those of mature age, to faithful and active services in the things of God, and refresh them in their labours ; to convey cheering messages to the grey-headed, from their home which is now not distant, and permit them to hear before-hand, the first low murmurings of their heavenly harps.

Ah, what sweet but awful sensations must we experience at the thought, that such a band of angels invisibly surrounds us ; and who knows how near we may be to that great cloud of witnesses, who before us have entered into rest, and of whom the world was not worthy ? Or should the gates through which a Samuel, a Moses, and Elias came back, though but for a moment, from the kingdom of everlasting rest to this globe of mortality—should those gates, since they passed through, have been closed, entirely closed. Who can declare it ? Enough—we live already in the midst of the invisible world. The inhabitants of heaven are our friends and companions, spirits are our ministers and guides. Let us then comfort ourselves with the recollection of this unseen army which surrounds us day and night, the horses and chariots of fire in countless number. And if there be any one here that is dispirited, timid, or easily dejected, at the thought of the multitude of his foes, let me remind him, that “they that be with *us*, are more than they that be with *them*.” Take this to thy comfort, and be at peace.

VI.

THE CAPTAIN OF THE CHILDREN OF JUDAH.

“Nahshon, the son of Amminadab, was captain of the children of Judah.” *The interpretation of his name is experience*, a term in every respect applicable to Jesus Christ our Saviour. For who has more experience in battle, than He whose bloody track is seen from the slaughter-field of Gethsemane and Golgotha, and from that sacred spot in the garden of Joseph, where he overcame the grave and swallowed up death in victory? And who has more skill in conflict than He who spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in himself? (Col. ii. 15. See the marginal reading.) Or who is more inured to the toils and pains of war, than He who now for nearly 2000 years, has never slumbered nor slept on his post, but by the power of his sword has safely conducted his weak and feeble church through millions of its foes, conquering and to conquer? Or who is more acquainted with the tumult of the camp, than He against whom an infatuated world has waged a ceaseless warfare, through every stage of time, without one moment of respite? And who is more accustomed to victory and triumph, or laden with the spoils of glory, than He who has made all his enemies his footstool? He may well, therefore, be called Nahshon, an experienced and valiant captain. And happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places. (Deut. xxxiii. 29.)

Nahshon was *the son of Amminadab*, which is, being interpreted, he hath bestowed a people. In this also is typified the Saviour of sinners, to whom God, who is rich in mercy, hath before the foundation of the world, bestowed a lost and ruined people, that, being quickened together with Christ, and raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, they might in the ages to come show forth the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us, through Christ Jesus. (Eph. ii. 4.)

And hear the gracious words which express his divine commission and the greatness of his power and love. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." (John vi. 37.) And again, "This is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all whom he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son and believeth in him, may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day." (John vi. 39, 40.)

Blessed are they who are privileged to hope that they are of the number of those who were given to the Saviour. They are safely kept in the hands of Him, who, in order to effect their redemption, willingly suffered himself to be offered up in sacrifice on the altar of the cross. In his name is their everlasting security. Through Him they are citizens of heaven.

Be thou thus encamped, O Judah of God ; *be thou encamped in peace*. Let others vainly confide

in their imaginary powers. Be thou humbled in the conviction of thy own helplessness and poverty. Lie low in the dust of self-abasement. Confess the power of divine grace. Be thou nothing, and let Christ be all and in all, and repose on the merits of thy Surety. Abide under that Banner to which thou hast sworn allegiance, and which is thy glory and thy trust, thy triumph and thy freedom. Let thy looks ever be directed to the east, to the morning. Let those that are without, look to the evening, to midnight, where for them also the sky is red, but terrible, and fearfully lowering ; thunder-clouds, laden with their curse and everlasting destruction, are gathering blackness.

Fix thy gaze, O Judah, upon the opening glories of the east, brighter, and yet brighter every moment. Breathe the sweetness and the fragrance of the morning. This is the good pleasure of thy God, who ere long will give thee the kingdom in the regions of eternal day. Thou must not regard the night which now surrounds thee. Onwards direct thy view to the Sabbath of eternal rest and peace, which now opens its lovely dawn. Thou must not suffer thine eyes to linger on the dark and troublous vision of thy sins, thy weaknesses, and infirmities, which still cling to thee—a body of death. Direct thine ardent glance beyond unto the morning, and feast thine eyes with that great and glorious day of freedom, which is thine even now in promise, a high and holy jubilee. Soar on hope's expanded pinions through the air, and leave behind the darkness and desolation of this lower world. Immortality and light, and crowns of glory, robes of surpassing splendour, palms of victory and triumph, joy and eternal

gladness—these, all these, await thee in the presence of thy God and Saviour in thine everlasting rest.

Judah, be thou comforted, as well thou mayest be. Though as yet in the dark valley through which thy brightening course conducts thee, sing aloud the praises of thy God.

Yes, onwards, my brethren. For he who is our leader is called Immanuel, God with us.

Amen.

SERMON III.

ISSACHAR, OR THE COUCHING BETWEEN TWO BURDENS.

GEN. xlix. 14, 15.

“Issachar is a strong ass, couching down between two burdens : and he saw that rest was good, and the land that it was pleasant, and bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant unto tribute.”

IN the blessing of Jacob, from which the words just read are taken, there are many hidden wonders. Its immediate application had respect to the outward condition of the ten tribes, and the things of this world : but if we penetrate somewhat deeper, by the aid of the Spirit of God, and pierce through the outer surface, we shall discover a rich vein of spiritual truth and knowledge which we greatly stand in need of, and which demands, and will repay our closest investigation.

When, a short time ago, we dwelt upon a few words of this remarkable prophecy, namely, that portion which relates to Judah, we already suspected that a mine of wealth lay concealed here, and that the ground sounded, as it were, hollow beneath our feet. And it is upon the self-same ground that we meet to-day, prepared, by the help of the Spirit, to dig silver and gold, where there is only the appearance of hay and stubble.

If we look at Issachar after the flesh, the fifth son of Jacob, the meaning of the text is very evident. It is here foretold that he should dwell in an inland situation, and that his tribe should be agricultural. But the prophecy refers also to the spiritual Issachar. Would to God that his tent were never pitched in the midst of ourselves.

It is to the spiritual application of this prophecy, so strikingly portrayed in our text, that we would now direct your attention.

We see here,

I. The position of Issachar.

II. How he came into that state.

III. The toil and danger to which he is subjected in the same.

I.

THE POSITION OF ISSACHAR.

“Issachar is a strong ass.” There is nothing prepossessing in this comparison. Judah is a lion’s whelp. Naphtali is a hind let loose. Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well, whose branches run over a wall. Jonathan is an eagle; the Shulamite a dove; Israel is a rose. In all these figures there is something agreeable to the mind. But—a strong ass—the name is in itself sufficient to deter us from seeking a near acquaintance with the person

whom it designates. And yet who can tell how many of us may come under this description in the book of God!

On what account Issachar is so named we shall better understand when his spiritual state, as contained in the figure, is unveiled to us.

Where do we behold Issachar? “Between two burdens.” In these words the patriarch gives no pleasing representation of his son. If he had described him as moving onward between two burdens, or borders, (as by some the word is rendered,) we should have said “Only wait a little; his present difficulties will be surmounted, and the glorious land will be found!” But no, he is *couching down*, and therefore his case is the worse.

To be so circumstanced is always dangerous. How alarming is the denunciation of God against the lukewarm! “I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot. I would that thou wert cold or hot. So because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.” (Rev. iii. 15, 16.) See how God condemns the wavering and undecided, who are neither faithful to his own colours nor to those of the world; who do not, indeed, reject him, yet they choose not his service, and thus vacillate between both their friends and foes. He distinctly declares that they are his enemies, and shall be treated as such. “He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.” (Matt. xii. 30.)

And if we suppose the Lord in these our days to examine his church, and see how many thousands of those who wish to be regarded as his faithful ministers, halt in their preaching between the pure gospel and

their own wisdom, we may well imagine him to say, "I would that ye were either believers or unbelievers ; but ye are neither one nor the other." Yes, unbelief itself would seem to be better than this unholy indecision, this uncertainty and want of determination in a matter of infinite moment.

But Issachar does not properly belong to those who are neither cold nor hot, neither for nor against Christ—neither Christians nor heathen. *He is for Christ*, and so far, in a certain sense, may be said to believe ; he appears to belong to the kingdom of God, and yet it is far from being well with him. He lies between Canaan and Egypt, between the state of a converted and unconverted man. We cannot account him one of the men of this world, much less can we esteem him a child of God. We dare not say that he still belongs to the ranks of the crooked and perverse generation of the ungodly, nor yet can we number him among the elect, who are kings and priests unto God for ever and ever. The position which he occupies is a middle one, between the kingdom of grace and that of Belial. And, remaining there, the lot which will hereafter be assigned him, will not be to sit down with the citizens of Zion, in the kingdom of their God, but to be cast into outer darkness, with the workers of iniquity, where there is weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.

Let us consider our Issachar more closely, and examine both his spiritual and external condition. His outward circumstances, *his life, and course of conduct*, appear really commendable, and produce a very favourable impression on the mind.

Do you think that you will find him walking in the

counsel of the ungodly, or standing in the way of sinners, or sitting in the seat of the scornful? (Psal. i. 1.) No. You do him great wrong in seeking for him there. He has left this spiritual Sodom, and separated himself far from it. He no longer burns incense on the high places and in the groves, and the assemblies of those who drink iniquity like water, are his abhorrence and aversion; he hates and opposes their evil courses. You can never discover him among the haunts of the wine-bibber, or in the public assemblies, where a blind and deluded world, as if possessed by a spirit of giddiness and infatuation, madly rages and tumultuates in unbridled pursuit of the phantom pleasure, and where the people dance to the sound of the pipe, Satan himself conducting their orgies. He has nothing in common with those who use as their watch-word "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die;" and he wallows not with the swine in the mire. Nor can you find him among the followers of a fond and flattering morality, who walk indeed uprightly, and conduct themselves with propriety, but desire to know nothing of a godly or God-fearing life, being fully satisfied with the rectitude of their intentions; who cast away from them the word and the sacraments, the commandments and the kingdom of God, as old and tattered garments, or who despise them as the playthings of the childish and the weak. No. Among the quiet in the land, among them that fear God doth Issachar abide. Where the gospel is faithfully preached; where the banner of the cross is unfurled; where men confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father; where the word of Christ dwells in men richly in all wisdom, and they teach and admonish one another in

psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, and holy hands are lifted up to heaven ; (Col. iii. 16.) where they lie down in the green pastures of the everlasting gospel, and drink from the living fountains of the sure mercies of David, life and fulness of joy ; there is Issachar to be found ; there hath he pitched his tabernacle and tent. He dwells among the saints, unto their assembly is he united.

What ! *Is Issachar, then, a hypocrite, and a deceiver ?* By no means. That cannot be said of him. Hypocrites are altogether a different class. This generation of Pharisees do not couch between two boundaries, but are still in the midst of Egypt.

What then ? If Issachar attaches himself to the church and people of God, of whom the world is not worthy, and that with uprightness and sincerity, what lacketh he then ? Alas ! much, very much ; yea, all that is essential to a state of grace. He dwells in the congregation of the righteous, but only outwardly, not in spirit and in truth. He is no living member of that holy body of which Christ is the head ; united, indeed, externally, but not really incorporated into the body of Christ. He is no fruitful branch of the tree of God ; nor a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree. (Rom. xi. 17.) He is not so engrafted in it, as to bloom and flourish by the communication of its sap and life. The bond which unites him to the church of God is human only, and corruptible, not spiritual and divine.

Do we look at *his state* ? It is no longer that of Egyptian darkness, arising from the prevalence of strong delusions. No. He is rich in the knowledge of salvation ; he knows the catechism by memory,

is well read in the Bible, and familiar with multitudes of sweet and animating hymns, and many accounts of awakened sinners and established saints.

What then is his state? *It is one of proud self-sufficiency*, of reliance on supposed merit and righteousness of his own, a condition of fancied security, attained by efforts which he has put forth alone and unaided. In hearing and reading, in his separation from the world, and in all his experience and attainments, all his hopes and dependences have centred in self. The Holy Ghost has no part in his illumination. He is not taught of God. What he has thus acquired remains crude and undigested, administering neither to his nourishment nor strength; or it is as ill-gotten wealth, locked up in coffers, and making no return; or as costly ointment, which yields no perfume.

Do we observe *his course of life*? Here there is nothing particular to be remarked. Issachar maintains an irreproachable conduct in the eyes of mankind. He lives in quiet, is domestic, retiring, well-conducted, active, honourable. He chooses the society and friendship of Christians, and despises the pleasures of the world. But is this the walk of which God speaks, when He says, "I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect?" (Gen. xvii. 1.) and to which Isaiah refers in the exhortation, "O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord;" (Isa. ii. 5.) and of which the apostle makes mention, "Our conversation is in heaven;" (Phil. iii. 20.) and, again, "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." (Gal. v. 25.)

Can we recognize in Issachar the operation of

the Spirit of God? Can we perceive in him indications of the presence of that well of water, which springeth up unto everlasting life? Alas! what can he be? He is partly the child of good education, and good habits; partly of a self-sought spirituality, which the Holy Ghost never will own, since he has indeed no share in effecting it.

Do we regard Issachar, as it respects *the peculiar duties of religion*? Here, too, is the appearance of that which is good and right; but are those prayers and praises which he daily offers up, either at home or in the great congregation, acceptable to God? Are they a sweet smelling savour, which ascends before the throne, from gifts which have been first received from heaven? Are they incense kindled by the Spirit of God, and arising from the censer of a broken and a contrite heart, which, in God's sight, is of great price? Oh no! he has, on the contrary, prepared his offering himself, having first obtained it from his own resources. Issachar prays when he *will* pray, not when he is moved and constrained to pray. It is Issachar that prays, not Christ and His Spirit praying within him.

How unhappy is his state between the two burdens. He is a Christian, without the new birth; he knows the lost state of man, without himself having felt it; he is learned in spiritual things, without being enlightened, and believes in Jesus, without reposing confidence in His merits; he esteems himself righteous, and yet is not so; he speaks of the evidences of a state of grace, while he is not in that state himself; he imagines that his life and conversation accord with the requirements of the gospel, and yet he is nothing

more than a natural man, one who has experienced no real change within, nor can show even the smallest work which bears the impress of the Spirit of God, but only that which his own hands have effected. The new man is not created in him, but the old man has put on the garb of piety.

Such is the state and condition of Issachar, no longer in Egypt, nor yet in Canaan. He has come out of the world, in a certain sense at least, but has not approached the kingdom of grace. He bears the Christian form, and is evangelical in his notions and in his course of conduct ; but he does not possess that life which is the gift of God alone—a new heart.

II.

THE MOTIVES WHICH SWAYED ISSACHAR.

Issachar couches between two burdens. *But how has he come into this situation ?* Our text informs us briefly, but pointedly. “He saw that rest was good, and the land that it was pleasant.” Issachar attained his position not by the drawing of the Father and the call of grace, or the powerful operation of the Holy Spirit ; but by the impulse of his own natural heart.

Did the painful sense of sin drive him to the Saviour ? Did the thick clouds and darkness of Sinai, the thunder of Ebal, the earnest desire of redemption, the anxious solicitude for the salvation of his soul, impel him to flee for refuge, to lay hold of

the hope set before him in the gospel? O no! far different were his motives and feelings in assuming the profession of religion.

“*He saw that rest was good.*” What kind of rest? That which is vouchsafed us in Christ? Peace with God? Deliverance from the curse and the power of sin, and from the miserable bondage and tyranny of the law? No, brethren. The rest which he sought was entirely of another description.

“*He saw the land that it was pleasant.*” What land? Was it that land of beauty and of brightness in the world on high, to which Jesus is himself the way? or was it the kingdom of grace watered by the dews of heaven, and on which the Sun of Righteousness ever sheds his invigorating rays? Did his thoughts and desires tend thither? Did he feel a secret longing after that as his home? No; this cannot be said of Issachar. The goodness of the rest, and the pleasantness of the land which Issachar desired, were quite of another kind. And what were they?

The causes, brethren, which move men to enter upon so dubious and unsanctified a state, are various.

One man feels himself attracted by *witnessing the concord and brotherly love which prevail among the quiet in the land*. He has, perhaps, had bitter experience of the falsehood and treachery of the world, and has thus learned that it can neither be trusted nor believed, and that it is, moreover, full of rancour and animosity. He has confided in friends, and been grievously betrayed. Deeply pained, he looks around him for rest. His eyes fall upon the congregation of the saints. He perceives that they are of one heart and one mind, and are united to each other by the sacred

bonds of love, and dwell together as brethren. This pleases him well. He sees that it is good, and his resolution is fixed. He joins himself to the society of the pious.

Another man has, by nature, a tender disposition ; he is easily moved, and *loves affecting sights and sacred solemnities*, and the pleasing emotions which they are calculated to excite. The occupations of the children of God, therefore, their zeal and ardour in the service of religion, and their fervent devotion, present to him no inconsiderable attractions. He sees the land that it is pleasant, and says, “ it is good to be here. Here will I build my tabernacle, and seek my rest.”

A third has a mind of a *contemplative and thoughtful* character. He meets with the word of God. Here he finds food in abundance ; here he can exercise his intellect and powers of thought, and give them full scope. With lively interest he applies himself to reading and diligent investigation. It is his delight henceforth to dwell among those who make the Bible the rule of their lives, and he takes pleasure with them in a mutual communication of Christian ideas and hopes, and in scriptural researches. It is from choice that he associates himself with the people of God, without being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. (1 Pet. i. 23.)

A fourth, *gifted with a quick perception of the sublime and beautiful*, is delighted with the glowing visions and delineations, with the attractive similitudes, with the lovely and affecting representations, and the splendid imagery with which the word of God abounds. He reads the inspired volume with the warm enthusiasm

with which he takes up a brilliant production of an earthly poet ; and he professes the religion of the Bible from the intellectual pleasure and mental gratification which it affords. There is no conversion here.

A fifth observes, that *in the houses of the just infinitely more order prevails* than in those of the children of this world. The peace which is found here, and the quiet, the love, and the continual cheerfulness ; the blessing also of the Lord, which ever rests upon them, and their prosperity—O, how do all these things commend themselves to his notice, especially if he considers the great difference which there is between his own house and theirs. “He sees this rest that it is good.” “I am wearied, he thinks, with incessant noise and bickering. It shall hereafter be otherwise. I will erect an altar in my house.” And he does erect one. He reads, and sings, and prays. The noise and tumult cease, and behold the house is changed and renewed. Yes, brethren, the house only, alas ! not the heart. The body is there, and the exterior of religion, but the Spirit and the life are wanting. It is the form of godliness, without the power thereof. The man draws nigh unto God with his lips, but his heart is far from him. He has gone out of the world, but the world has not gone out of him. The garment is changed, but the person remains the same.

Behold, my brethren, such is Issachar, couching between two burdens. “He sees that rest is good, and the land that it is pleasant.” He is not conscious of the longing for salvation, and the hunger and thirst after righteousness, nor of the Holy Ghost moving him to the gospel ; but the privileges of this present life,

in which the children of God rejoice, excite his desire to partake of them. He becomes pious in his own way, quiet retiring, observant of the duties of religion by his own endeavours. He applies himself to religion as he would apply himself to a business, a study, or one of the liberal arts, and appropriates to himself whatsoever belongs to the life and being of the Christian. Two things only are wanting, and with them all that constitutes spiritual existences, that marks and distinguishes the character of the child of God; namely, the broken and contrite heart, in which alone the Lord will dwell, and the Holy Spirit, respecting whom it is said, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

Issachar! ah! unhappy Issachar, who couches between two burdens, and seest that rest is good, and the land that it is pleasant,—the land that is beyond the Jordan shalt thou never inherit, nor enjoy the eternal Sabbath, that rest which remaineth for the people of God!

III.

THE TOIL AND DANGER OF ISSACHAR.

We have seen the position of Issachar, and we know also the motives by which he was influenced. Let us now glance for a moment at *the toil and danger to which he is subjected*. His pain and misery are set forth in the text, "He bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant to tribute."

He bowed his shoulder to bear. There lies a heavy weight upon him, under which he sighs and pants ; and this burden is—his sins perhaps? O, would to God that they were felt as such, then would he soon be in a better state ! It is, on the contrary, the religion which he has assumed that is his burden. Our Saviour says, indeed, “ My yoke is easy, and my burden is light ;” but of this Issachar is not sensible.

Let me request you to turn to the tenth chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah, and the twenty-seventh verse. It is there said, “ and it shall come to pass in that day,” the day of the New Testament,—“ that his burden shall be taken away from off thy shoulder, and his yoke from off thy neck, and the yoke shall be destroyed, because of thy anointing.” The yoke falls off, when the neck is bathed with oil. And when we are anointed with the Holy Ghost, and made partakers of his grace, then is the burden taken off our shoulder ; then are the law and the service of God no longer an oppressive yoke, a heavy burden, but easy and pleasant, our comfort and our joy. We stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and are not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Christ having made us free, we are free indeed. (Gal. v. 1.)

But Issachar is not anointed, and therefore his shoulder is bowed down to bear, and sinks under the weight. He has not gone to the Saviour with a heart deeply sensible of its need, and moved to repentance, to receive out of his fulness, and grace for grace. Issachar has changed and renewed himself, and would, by his own endeavours, walk in the path of the true Christian. He would assume the character of a child of God ; he would

soar upwards, but has no wings ; he would sing and pray, but has neither the spirit by which believers are actuated, nor their delight in holy exercises ; he would run and walk on the way to Zion, but is lame, and has not applied to the good Physician to be healed ; he would keep the law, but alas ! he is destitute of power and love, of joy, and of strength ?

O how hard is the service in which he is engaged, how grievous the bondage under which he is oppressed, how vainly does he weary himself in the course which he has chosen ; in the hopeless endeavour to save himself by works and righteousness of his own ; in labour without fruit, toil without reward !

Issachar bowed his shoulder to bear ; and what is he ? *A servant unto tribute.* What a striking representation ! His prayers and services, both in public and private, are but as tribute, which he knows that he *must* pay ; and he brings it, not as a child, willingly and joyfully, but as a servant, by compulsion, as though it were extracted with reluctance from his hard earned pittance. The Spirit of grace and supplication has not been poured out upon him. He has no real union with Him in whom is life. From the children of God, the tribute of prayer and praise flows freely, as water from the fountain ; but Issachar is a dry well ; how can it flow from thence ? When the hour arrives for the payment of his tribute, he feels that he is compelled to lay down the sum required, and, with much labour, it is produced and cast down before God ; but the coin is base, and will not be accepted, for since it bears not the image of the second, but of the first Adam, it will never be received into the treasury of God.

Behold, such is Issachar ; not a child of the house, but a poor “servant of tribute,” who has nothing, and yet must pay, and who, moreover, discharges his debt, with base coin, which, as such is rejected. Since he is the bearer of such a burden, and groans under the galling yoke of self-imposed services, and bends beneath the severe rod of the law, without vigour and animation, he is thence called “a strong ass.”

And, O, it is painful and distressing to think of *his misery and danger*. The man imagines, in his blindness, that he really belongs to the kingdom of God ; but, alas ! he ranks as much with “them that are without,” as the careless and unthinking world. He has apparently succeeded well in conforming his life to that of the children of God, and therefore cherishes the vain delusion, that he is one of their number ; and as he is frequently regarded and treated as such by true believers, his blindness becomes the more hopeless, and he is confirmed in his carnal security. The poor, pitiable man ! He thinks that he dwells in Canaan, but his tent is near to Tophet, and on the brink of the pit of destruction. He dreams that he is in Jerusalem, but, alas ! he couches not far from the Dead Sea, near Adma and Zeboim. And when the Lord shall come with fire and brimstone, He cannot spare Issachar ; and when his heart within him would almost break with compassion towards that unhappy one, couching between the burdens, He must consume him in his wrath, and sweep him away together with the rest of the ungodly, with the besom of destruction. (Isaiah xiv. 23.)

O let every one of us, therefore, who believes himself to be in Jerusalem, come now before God with the earnest supplication of David, "Search me, O God, and know my heart ; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." (Psal. cxxxix. 23, 24.) Be assured, that in the last day nothing will avail but that which the Holy Ghost has witnessed and wrought in us, and enabled us to do. All that is our own will be burned up as hay. All self-sought spirituality and self-imposed service ; all self-wrought piety and holiness, will be deemed of no value, and committed to the flames. Then no inquiry will be made after the knowledge which you have attained, merely by catechisms and preaching, but only after what you have learned of the Holy Spirit in the school of Christ. It will not then be asked how often you have prayed and given thanks : but whether your prayers and thanksgivings were uttered in the Spirit, in the name of Jesus. No examination will then be instituted with regard to your communion with believers upon earth, but respecting your union with him who is the life—whether you are one with Christ, who is the Living Head.

Alas ! many are the unhappy Issachars in the world, who couch between two burdens, who assume the profession of religion from some unhallowed motive, receiving no sanction in the word of God, and who are not indebted to the Spirit of God for the least portion of their religion. God be merciful unto them, and open their eyes, that they may see their real state. Many, no doubt, are self-deceived and dazzled by the gospel form and complexion of the religion which

they have assumed. It is but an outward appearance ; it is no reality. The covering is there ; but where, under the covering, is the broken heart, the contrite spirit, the seed of the heavenly birth, the new creature ? Where is the thirst after the living water, after the cleansing efficacy of the blood of Jesus ? Where are all these things which are of the operation of the Holy Ghost, and which alone constitute a Christian ? They are wanting.

O may a God of mercy preserve us from such a fearful delusion, which must eventually overwhelm the deceived soul in everlasting destruction. May he terrify us with the thunders of his power and with the voice of the trumpet, from couching down, in this unholy state, between the borders of Egypt and Canaan, and conduct us all to that blessed rest into which they that believe have already entered, that we may say in truth, "The Spirit of God hath created me, and the inspiration of the Almighty hath given me life."

Amen.

SERMON IV.

THE VISION OF THE NIGHT.

ZECH. i. 8.

“ I saw by the night, and behold a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle-trees that were in the bottom; and behind him were there red horses, speckled, and white.”

THE prophecies of Zechariah are esteemed as some of the sweetest and most pleasant fruits which grow on the tree of the Old Testament.

This prophet has much resemblance both to Isaiah and Ezekiel. Glowing as the latter, and rich as he in sublime descriptions, and grand, striking, and mysterious visions, he shares with the former the name of Evangelical prophet.

The Anointed of God, with his kingdom, forms the central point and axis around which the fire-wheel of all his flaming imagery of visions and revelations continually revolves. All the glory is given to the Messiah. Thus, in the picture before us, the most prominent object in the foreground, which leaves all the rest in the shade and in the distance, is the long expected Saviour of the world, the testimony of whom is the spirit of prophecy. (Rev. xix. 10.)

It is a beautiful and consoling representation. Let us examine it more closely. We will consider,

- I. The time in which the vision was beheld.
 - II. The vision itself, in its consolatory signification.
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I.

THE TIME IN WHICH THE VISION WAS BEHELD.

Zechariah expressly states, that it was *a vision of the night*.

He means in the first place, *the natural night*; when the wearied children of men repose themselves in sleep. The Lord then came to him and opened the eyes of his mind, and permitted him to see manifestly depicted before him, in all their brilliant colouring, the forms which he describes. The Lord would effectually imprint upon his mind that great truth, that He who keepeth Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps. It is therefore put forth, not as a mere statement, but illustrated by a palpable representation, and revealed to him, not in the daytime, but in the shadows of the night.

Of such a nocturnal visitation from God, almost all the saints, both of the Old and New Testament, were enabled to testify; and Elihu speaks of it to Job as though it were of ordinary occurrence. "In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumbering upon the bed; then he openeth the

ears of men, and sealeth their instruction, that he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man"—(Job. xxxiii. 15—17.) O how many are there, who like Nicodemus, trace their first acquaintance with Jesus to that silent hour.

When our wearied body is at rest, and when surrounded by darkness, we are freed from the agitating occupations of the day, our souls are more quick in their perception, our thoughts more free and unrestrained, our reflections more deep and penetrating, our conscience more powerful in its operations, more unchecked and pointed in its appeals. Then does the trumpet of the word give a clear and certain sound ; then peals around us the thunder of the curse ; then does the call to repentance shake and alarm our inmost souls ; and if the sight of our sins be vouchsafed us, of our base and unprofitable life, of our broken vows and resolutions, of our defilement and dissimulation—if that death which awaits us, that final judgment to which we are hastening, and that bleeding Saviour whom we despise ; if these awful visions pass before us, and invade the solitude of our chamber, and stand around our bed—O how terrific, how appalling the spectacle ! Whither can we fly from such dreadful sights ? To the gay and thoughtless company of our friends ? They are buried in sleep. To the distractions of daily occupation ? They are at an end. To the places of concourse and the busy haunts of men ? They are forsaken. It is night, and there is no sound to affect the ear, nothing to engage the eye, or restrain the vigour of the mind.

At such a time your little bark of the soul is driven out upon the restless wave. You cast anchor once

and again ; but the anchor takes no hold. You anxiously look around for a haven of rest. But, behold in every haven the tempest rages as in the open sea, and the abyss is yawning beneath. You seek to appease the storm within, and say to yourself, " Be at rest ; there is no danger. Why art thou anxious ? " But no consoling thoughts can at such a season avail. Your perplexity and distress increase, till at length you find Him who said to the sea, " Peace, be still ; " and then there is a great calm. Your danger is passed, your fears are gone ; you are now secure and happy in the haven where you would be.

Multitudes of Christians can number, in their own experience many such painful, but not the less salutary, night scenes, and can say, in a certain sense, with the Temanite, " In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, fear came upon me, and trembling which made all my bones to shake. Then a spirit passed before my face ; the hair of my flesh stood up. It stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof : an image was before mine eyes ; there was silence, and I heard a voice saying, Shall mortal man be more just than God ? shall a man be more pure than his Maker ? " (Job iv. 13—17.)

There are some, perhaps, present, who, absorbed by day in the cares of the world, or hurried into the vortex of its dissipations and pleasures, hear not the call of God to consider their ways. O, that such visions of the night, such communications from heaven, may soon be vouchsafed you ; and that the voice of the Almighty may reach your inmost soul. God

grant that it may be this very night, for we know not that another shall be added to your number. May it not already be said to some one, who now hears me, to-morrow thou shalt die? Let this thought be with you, brethren, when next you retire to rest upon your beds.

“I saw by the night,” saith the prophet, and he appears to intimate by that expression, *the circumstances under which he beheld the vision*. Zechariah lived about five hundred years before the first Advent. Together with his parents, he was carried by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon, and afterwards, in consequence of the decree of Cyrus, returned, with the first of the captivity, who sought the land of their fathers; and he assisted in laying the foundation both of the city and temple.

It was then a happy time, a season of rejoicing and of cheerful hope. The covenant God of Israel had made manifest His care for his people, in a way which could not be misunderstood, and all things were full of joyful expectation of the golden age that was about to return. It was not then night to the people of Israel, but bright and shining day. But this was not of long continuance. The Samaritans sought to interrupt the harmony which prevailed. For scarcely were the walls of the city and of the temple commenced, with alacrity and gladness, when these strangers, who were more heathen than Jews, proposed to associate themselves with the children of Abraham in the work, and thus to acquire a right in the temple of the Lord, and in the administration of its services. This could never be allowed. Hence arose implacable hostility, for the Samaritans sent letters to Babylon,

calumniating the Jews engaged in the undertaking, representing them with great bitterness as a faithless and rebellious race, who might endanger the peace of the Persian monarchy. Credit was given to these base accusations, and a royal edict issued, by which the building of Jerusalem was forbidden, and permission given the Samaritans to compel the Jews, by fire and sword, to desist from the work. Then followed a time of tumult and distress to the people of God, and their hopes perished. Their brightest prospects were in a moment overclouded, and God seemed to have again forsaken His inheritance. The most lovely morning was unexpectedly converted into a night of gloom.

Allusion, no doubt, was made to these painful circumstances, when the prophet said in my text, "I saw by the night." It seemed as though this external obscurity inwardly prevailed in his soul, as if the day had declined within him, and was succeeded by the night. And how should it be otherwise? Every thing around him tended to produce such oppressive sensations; his gloomy forebodings enveloped his soul in thick clouds of doubt and despondency. No indications of the watchful and protecting care of the Almighty were visible. Yet, notwithstanding, dark as it appeared both outwardly and within, Zechariah was enabled to say of himself, "I saw by the night, and behold!"

"*I saw by the night.*" Some can speak of the night who have passed through it, and are now rejoicing in the blessings of the morning. It is night, in spiritual things, in proportion as our eyes are darkened. Then the hand which has assigned our pain and suffering is unperceived, we are lost in the wilderness of un-

certainly, and no outlet can be found either on the right hand or on the left ; or a fire falls upon our spiritual building, and we know not whence the flames have been kindled, by which our honour, our name, and domestic happiness are destroyed, whether they are derived from heaven or from hell.

It is night, *when the world misunderstands and calumniates* us, and we cry to God to interpose in our behalf, and there is neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regardeth ; or when we lie sunk in the deepest need, and stroke upon stroke is laid upon us, and our prayer cannot reach the clouds, but is dissipated and lost in the air around us, no help appears, no aid is at hand, no prospect of deliverance opens before us, no explication is given of our embarrassments, and our wanderings in the dark valley remain an incomprehensible dispensation, a deep mystery, the meaning and intention and final issue of which are altogether hidden from our view. When it is thus with any poor soul, he is enveloped in darkness. The greater light which rules the day *has set* before his eyes. He is the man of whom Job speaks, when he says, that his way is hid, and that God hath hedged him in. (Job iii. 23.)

O how great, *how blessed the change, when God says respecting a soul, "let there be light, and there is light."* The darkness is past, and the true light now shineth. Thus it was with Job, when the scope and intention of all his afflictions were made known to him ; and with Hagar, when the angel pointed out to her the well of water in the wilderness ; and with Abraham, when a voice came to him from heaven, "lay not thy hand upon the lad," and his fiery trial was

at once terminated ; and with Jacob, when that testimony was borne him, “ thou hast power with God, and with man, and hast prevailed ;” and the Lord blessed him in the night, after his severe conflict. And many such visitations from on high are vouchsafed the children of God, even in our own days. Salvation comes to their house as an unexpected guest, their trials melt away and disperse as a veil of mist upon the mountains, or a bright light from heaven suddenly illuminates their path.

But my brethren, this can scarcely be termed, to see by the night. It is rather the day-break shedding its lovely rays, its opening glories, into the cave of Adullam. (1 Sam. xxii. 1 ; Micah i. 15.) The Saviour then manifests himself to us as he doth not unto the world, and our unbelieving doubts and fears are at once dispelled ; and whilst we acknowledge the power and presence of the Godhead, we exclaim with grateful heart, Lord thou hast changed my night into day. (John xiv. 22 ; xx. 27, 28.)

But when the sun remains hidden behind the clouds, and the footsteps of Jehovah are in the great waters, and men, without seeing their way plainly, follow the guidance of their God, and rest in naked faith on the Divine assurance, “ what I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter ;” and, believing in opposition to human reasonings, and hoping against hope, repose simply upon him who has said, “ When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee : and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee : when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned ; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee”—(Isa. xliii. 2.) When, entrenching themselves in such promises, as in

a strong hold, and looking by faith to that Angel of the Lord who said to Manoah, "Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret or wonderful?" and by this name, "The Wonderful," they are refreshed as with milk and honey in the desert—When, without tasting, or seeing, or feeling, they rejoice in the very present help of that God who delivered Daniel from the jaws of the lion, and preserved the three children in the burning fiery furnace, and commanded a fish to take up Jonah, and keep him as in an ark of safety in the deep waters—When they rely on that God who sent dogs to Lazarus, that they should lick his sores and mitigate his pain, and who appointed ravens to minister to Elijah, and feed him in the wilderness—Then, brethren, then may it be said, that they see visions in the darkness, that they perceive God through the thick and lowering clouds; and in the words of Zechariah they may exclaim, "I saw by the night and behold!"

There is another description of night of a yet more troublous kind, which David had in view when he said, "Hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit." But even then we are not left without hope. We have that most precious promise, that while we trust in the Lord and stay ourselves upon our God, a light shall rise in obscurity, and our darkness shall be as noon day. (Isaiah lviii. 10.)

When Satan assaults me with his fearful allurements or his fiery darts, and I am left without help or succour, then has the sun set beneath my horizon. But I see by the night, and behold, mine eye rests upon Him, who to death is its plague, and

to the grave its destruction ; and that great truth is brought home to my mind, that in Him I have already “overcome the wicked one,” and he can no more put me to shame. Then it is given me, at the sight of my victorious Head, to triumph in the conflict, and to enjoy peace in the midst of tumult and alarm. What is this but a vision of the night ?

When, after a painful fall, I am alarmed with a sense of my sin and misery, and almost overwhelmed with despair, then I sit in darkness, the light shineth not about me, my sins are greater than I can bear. At length I am enabled to think of that grace, which recovers the children of God from the horrible pit and from the miry clay, and sets their feet upon a rock, and orders their going. I call to mind the good Shepherd, who left the ninety and nine sheep in the wilderness, and came to seek and to save that which was lost, and did not desist until he found it, and laid it on his shoulders, and carried it home rejoicing. O how cheering the sight ! As yet the Lord has not manifested himself to me, nor can I rejoice ; but mercy has again visited me, and though confidence and hope have not returned, yet “my soul waiteth for the Lord, yea, more than they that watch for the morning.” (Psal. cxxx. 6.)

When the Lord takes from me the sense of His indwelling through the Spirit, and withdraws from me the light of his countenance, and leaves me to the experience of my utter sinfulness ; when the vigour of my spiritual life fails, and the indications of my state of grace lose their special character ; when faith, which before could rejoice, gives utterance only to a poor compressed and feeble cry, “O God, be not severe to me ;” when love is withered by the wintry

blast, or chilled and frozen, so that I am compelled to exclaim, with David, "I am like unto one appointed to die," and I can no longer dare to regard myself as of the camp of Judah ; when I transgress without tears, and stumble and fall without contrition, and read the word without delight, and pray without earnestness ; Oh, this is indeed a season of spiritual darkness.

But *there is a faith which can dissipate even such a darkness as this*, and under the full conviction of our spiritual poverty, needs not the aid of sensible perception. He who is "the Amen, the faithful and true witness," (Rev. iii. 14.) stands before me in this my low estate, and I hear him saying in the spirit, "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord, thy Redeemer. For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee." (Isa. liv. 8, 10.) By faith I behold a covenant God in Christ Jesus ; I look to "Him that justifieth the ungodly," that requireth only empty vessels, that he may fill them with his glory. (Rom. iv. 5.) The mystery of righteousness opens itself before me ; I see that I am justified and saved, not by works of my own, but only through the merits of Jesus ; that my faith, hope, and charity must be derived from Him : that His intercession alone can make my approach acceptable unto the Father ; and while the senses are dead within me, and my heart is sunk in wretchedness and misery, it is given to me by the Holy Ghost to cast myself by faith on that Saviour,

who hath said, "my grace is sufficient for thee, my strength is made perfect in weakness." Then is the night turned into day. The sun has not indeed dispersed the overhanging clouds, and his bright beams have not yet penetrated my inmost soul ; but I can by faith enter within the veil, and I behold the sun, though many are the clouds which intervene. Then can I say that I see by the night, and give praises to Him who hath opened mine eyes to behold.

II.

THE VISION OF THE NIGHT.

What was *the vision which our prophet beheld* ? Truly it was a lovely sight, and it remained stationary before his wondering eyes in all the brightness and freshness of its colouring. An angel also talked with him, and showed him what these things were, but we need not refer to his words, because even the vision itself speaks to us "good words and comfortable words." It is full of the richest consolations, the most cheering promises.

Let us now turn aside and see this great sight. The place whereon we stand is holy ground. (Exod. iii. 3, 5.) The man who stands among the myrtle-trees, seems to be clad in bright and glittering armour, and as appears in the sequel, is the Angel of the covenant, the man Christ Jesus.

Our Lord reveals himself to his people under different characters, suited to their various wants and circumstances.

Is any one of them *timid and distrustful*? he unveils his face, beaming with a love beyond that of a mother, and exclaims, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee." (Isa. xlix. 15.) Behold "as one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." (Isa. lxvi. 13.)

Have any *wandered from the fold*? The good Shepherd leaves them not to perish upon the mountains, and upon every high hill, but seeks them out, that he may deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. (Ezek. xxxiv. 12.)

Is any *sick*? he reveals himself as the good physician, who healeth all our diseases. (Psal. ciii. 3.)

Is any one *dispirited and alarmed*? instantly he stands before him with his sword drawn in his hand. As Captain of the host of the Lord is he now come. (Josh. v. 13, 14.)

Does any trembling sinner feel oppressed *under a sense of the wrath of God*? the Saviour manifests himself as coming from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah; glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength. And to the inquiry, who is this, and wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine fat? the incarnate God replies, "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with me; for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury, and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of ven-

geance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come." (Isa lxiii. 1—4.)

Or is any *tied and bound with the chain of his sins?* the Lord Jesus makes himself known, as sent "to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound," (Isa. lxi. 1.) as the mighty deliverer, who bears "the keys of hell and of death." (Rev. i. 18.)

Now in the days of Zechariah a warrior was, of all men, held in chief estimation, for there was then war in the land. And behold, the Keeper of Israel reveals himself as such; "I saw by the night, and behold *a man*." Our Lord is a man. This is a truth full of comfort, for it reminds us that our own nature is united to the Godhead, that it is borne by Him who sitteth upon the throne. Christ is a man; how sweet the assurance. The Church is his bride; she bears His name. This blessed privilege applies equally to every individual believer. (Isa. xlix. 14—16.) He will not deny us, but acknowledge us for his own.

Our Saviour a man! O blessed truth. It is in the form of man that we are best enabled, that we love most to contemplate him. In that form he lives in our thoughts, he stands before us as our Advocate with the Father, when we kneel at his footstool. We think of his wounds, we trace with wonder and adoring gratitude the prints of the nails in his hands and feet. We here behold the fountain of every blessing, the source of our peace. And is it not as man that the Son of God was enabled to suffer in our behalf, to be wounded for our transgressions, to die that we might live? Is it not thus that he makes manifest to saints and angels a love which is stronger than death? Well, therefore, may we rejoice, when we can say respecting

our visions of the Almighty, "I saw by the night, and behold, a man."

The man whom Zechariah beheld, *rode upon a horse*. In the Song of Solomon the church is represented under the figure of horses ; "I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariot." (Cant. i. 9.) And in the tenth chapter of the prophecy from which my text is taken, it is said, "The Lord of hosts hath visited his flock, the house of Judah, and hath made them as his goodly horse in the battle." We may therefore conclude that it is the Church which is represented by the red horse in the vision, that it is ourselves who are sprinkled with the blood of Jesus.

We are led and directed by his Spirit and his word, and his hand nourishes and supports us. At first we bear the yoke of the law, and are oppressed with that grievous bondage which neither we nor our fathers could bear. Then, being delivered from the law, we become the servants of righteousness, and walk abroad in the green pastures, and by the still waters of grace and comfort, and rejoice in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free.

The battle-horse of Job is an apt emblem of the confirmed Christian, who is strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. "He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his strength, he goeth on to meet the armed men. He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted, neither turneth he back from the sword. The quiver rattleth against him, the glittering spear and the shield. He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage, neither believeth he that it is the sound of the trumpet. He saith among the trumpets, Ha, ha. He smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder

of the captains, and the shouting." (Job xxxix. 21—25.) But if at any time he is elated by the thought of his own imaginary power and glory, the Lord takes effectual means to humble him. He passes the yoke over his beautiful neck, and sends him with Judah to plow, or with Jacob into the valley to break the clods. (Hos. x. 11.)

It is through the man Christ Jesus that we are 'made more than conquerors. HE fighteth for us, and by the arm of His power every enemy is put in subjection under our feet; and when at length He shall come again in his glorious majesty, to judge both the quick and the dead, we shall accompany his chariot of victory, and participate in the splendours of his triumph.

There is another truth which is intimated by the appearance of the man on horse in the vision, namely, *the speedy help and deliverance which the Lord affords to his church in every difficulty or distress.* If the Saviour of mankind still walked upon the earth in the garb of mortality, the faith of many a child of sorrow would be greatly exercised whilst He was administering relief to a fellow-sufferer, and often would be heard the cry of the sister of Lazarus, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." But now He is a very present help to his people wherever his aid is sought. In places the most remote from each other, it may at the same moment be said, in the language of the church of old, "The voice of my Beloved! Behold he cometh leaping upon the mountains and skipping upon the hills. My beloved is like a roe or a young hart. Behold he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, showing himself through the lattice." (Cant. ii. 8, 9.)

In the hour of need his presence is manifested both by day and by night, and even when the doors are shut, He stands in the midst, as He visited the disciples at Jerusalem, and says, "Peace be unto you." When we may suppose him far distant, "Behold, He stands at the door and knocks ; if any man hear His voice and open the door, He comes in to him and sups with him, and he with Him." (Rev. iii. 20.) To the righteous there ariseth a light in the darkness. The bright shining of the Saviour's countenance beams through their habitation and refreshes their soul. They can say with Habakkuk, "Thou ridest upon thy horses and thy chariots of salvation." (Hab. iii. 8.)

The horse beheld in the vision was red, as representing the church, which is covered with the blood and righteousness of the Saviour, and thereby obtains deliverance from sin and guilt, and from the power and dominion of the wicked one.

And whence cometh He that sitteth upon the horse ? Is it not from the Red Sea, where the enemies of the spiritual Israel were signally overthrown by the arm of the Almighty ? Is it not from Gethsemane and Golgotha, where he triumphed over principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly ? Thus was bruised the head of the serpent ; thus was the prey taken from the mighty, and the lawful captive delivered ; thus was peace made by the blood of the cross.

And he stood among the myrtle-trees. These, my brethren, are the trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified. Under the influence of the heavenly dew their branches spread, and they cast forth their roots as Lebanon. (Hos. xiv.

15, 16.) Supported by the grace, power, and faithfulness of Jehovah, they flourish in unfading verdure, and yield the sweetest fragrance, through the immediate operation of the Holy Ghost. The true church, the children of God on earth, are here represented. They are as the lovely myrtle, wherewith the King of kings entwines a wreath of glory for his head, as he says by his prophet, thou shalt be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God." (Isa. lxii. 3.) For they are "predestinated by Jesus Christ to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made them accepted in the Beloved." (Eph. i. 5, 6.)

And as branches of myrtle were emblematic of joy among the Jews, and were borne with songs of gladness before the bridegroom ; so do the children of God cause joy to abound in the kingdom of heaven. God himself rejoices over them. (Isa. lxii. 5.) For thus saith the Lord, "Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken, neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate, but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, (that is, my delight is in her,) and thy land Beulah, (or, married) for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married." (Isa. lxii. 4.)

And where grew the myrtle-trees ? "*In the bottom ;*" that is, in a low ground. In such a situation they flourish to the greatest advantage : their leaves assume the richest verdure, and there they yield the sweetest fragrance. And so it is in spiritual things. In the valley of humiliation and lowliness of mind, of self-renunciation and poverty of spirit, there will you find the most rapid growth, the greatest conformity to the will of God, the most perfect transformation into the

likeness of Him who calls us into the valley, that he may teach us heavenly wisdom, and confer upon us the blessing of peace. "At that time Jesus answered, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and *learn* of me, for *I am meek and lowly in heart*, and ye shall find *rest* unto your souls." (Matt. xi. 25, 26, 28, 29.)

The man *stood* between the myrtle-trees. So Christ *abides* with his church. He "*dwells* with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." (Isa lvii. 15.) He is in the midst of his church and people to employ them as seemeth good unto him, and to protect them by his power. "Yea," exclaims the prophet Zephaniah, "the Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing." (Zeph. iii. 17.)

And behold, "*behind him were there red horses speckled and white.*" And what are these? Our prophet himself made the same inquiry, and has recorded the answer. "The man that stood among the myrtle-trees answered and said, These are they whom the Lord hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth." (ver. 10.) Are they not then the hosts of Mahanaim, ministering spirits "sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation!" May they not also be regarded as the perfections of the Godhead,

which surround us for our comfort and deliverance, his grace, his truth, his mercy, his almighty power; or as the precious promises, resting on which, neither the Red Sea, which seems to shut us in, and keep us in the power of the enemy, nor the cloud-capped mountains, with their inaccessible summits, nor the deepest gulfs yawning at our feet, nor the darkest night, with all its fearful horrors, can move us or obstruct us in our onward progress toward the heavenly Zion? The promises, the attributes, and the angelic messengers of Jehovah, these ever accompany *him* who was seen among the myrtle-trees, and wherever he is, there are also the hosts of God around him; and wherever Christ gains admittance into a house or heart, the glory of the Lord filleth the same.

This, then, was the vision of Zechariah, which he saw by the night to his comfort concerning Jerusalem, and it is a personification of truth. Even now may it be seen among us. O think of this heavenly vision; think of it as you lie upon your bed at night, whenever care spreads her heavy wing over you, and Satan hurls against you his fiery darts; think of it by day, as often as darkness pervades your soul; and when all sense and feeling are gone, lift up the eye of faith, and behold that which was seen by Zechariah by the night, and be comforted.

I well know, that in every affliction and distress of the beloved children of God in these days, as well as in former times, He is near at hand to comfort and to bless them. Only take courage, brethren, be comforted; before another sun has set, many, perhaps, who now think that the Lord hath forsaken them, and their God hath forgotten them, ashamed of their un-

belief, will exclaim with Jacob, "Surely God is in this place, and I knew it not!" Many such, perhaps, may have their eyes opened, as the servant of Elijah, to behold the mountain covered with chariots of fire and horses of fire, and feel constrained to cry aloud with the prophet, My father, my father! the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof." But yet, beloved brethren, if this consolation should be absent, and if darkness should for a time be left to hang over you, then may God grant, in his mercy, that you may at least be enabled to exclaim with Zechariah, at such a time and under such circumstances,

I saw by the night, and behold! behold!—

Amen.

SERMON V.

SPIRITUAL DECLINE AND RECOVERY.

HEB. vi. 4—6.

“For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.”

THESE, my brethren, are well known and important words, of which I would speak on the present occasion. And who is there among you, that is not aware of the reason why they are so well known, and of their deep importance?

Many of you are, no doubt, curious to learn how the passage before us will be now treated. But you are greatly mistaken, my brethren, if you imagine that I have selected this text, for the purpose of displaying my skill and wisdom. No; for that would very ill accord with my present design, and justly expose me to censure.

Nor let any one suppose, that it is my intention to afford new matter for speculation at home, or that I

mean to pamper the lust of disputation and controversy, and pour oil into the fire of party disquisition. The former is indeed superfluous; for so much of nice distinction and refinement, so many vain and fruitless inquiries every where abound, that here and there the realities of life seem to be almost overlooked and forgotten. And as to the latter, there is no need that the fire of conflicting opinions should burn still brighter among us, rather than smoulder beneath its expiring ashes. And how could I, by fanning such a flame, forward the cause of truth, or remain consistent with myself, or with the sentiments which I have recently advanced on unity? No, no; my design is far otherwise. For since this portion of Scripture, as well as every other, is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works—(2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.)—And since it appears to me especially suitable for a day such as this, when many weary and heavy laden souls, oppressed under a sense of sin; many sons and daughters, who in a state of spiritual declension, having erred and strayed like lost sheep, stand apart, and deem themselves guilty of covenant breaking, and would gladly, if it might be, renew their covenant with God—I have, therefore, selected the words before us, looking upwards in hope that the Lord may enable me, by his grace, to speak a word in season to him that is weary. O may it appear that not I only have chosen this passage; but that He, in whose name I speak, has appointed it for our present consideration, and will bless it to the edification of many.

There are three points in this passage of Scripture which demand our attention.

- I. The *persons* who are spoken of.
 - II. The *fall* of which they are susceptible.
 - III. The *warning* which is given them.
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I.

THE PERSONS OF WHOM THE APOSTLE SPEAKS.

Are they the children of God or not?—A most important inquiry, and one which has caused many a head to throb, many a heart to ache!

There are some, as you are aware, who suppose St. Paul to refer, in this passage, not to such as have been born of the Spirit; but to persons who have possessed what has been termed a temporary faith—to men in whose emotions, expressions, and desires there appears to have been a kind of change, but who have not been really renewed and converted, and are, therefore, to be regarded as of the number of “those that are without.” This interpretation is far fetched, and evidently arises from an over anxiety to uphold, by our text, one of the most consolatory and precious doctrines of our holy faith; namely, the doctrine of free grace and final perseverance. But whether such anxious solicitude be well founded or not, it is in no case right, nor in accordance with the truth, for men to accommodate the word of God to their own peculiar systems, and wrest and pervert it after their own pleasure. This cannot be called, to “tremble at God’s word.” (Isa. lxvi. 2.) The word may bear rule and our systems be in subjection, but not the reverse.

St. Paul speaks of the children of God. Of the children of God? you exclaim; and can they fall from grace, can they perish out of the right way, can they in the end be lost! Have patience, brethren; do not forestall that which in due course will come before you. Every part of our subject shall receive its distinct and separate investigation. I will first of all prove to you, that St. Paul does speak of the children of God.

You will observe, that *the Apostle describes the persons he has in view by various characteristics*, which plainly indicate that they are partakers of spiritual life. We will consider these marks in due order. And do you, my Christian brethren, as we proceed in the inquiry, institute a close and searching self-examination, and see whether you do not discover in yourselves these signs and seals of the true Israel.

The first part of the description which the apostle gives of the persons to whom he refers is, that *they were once enlightened*. Light is conveyed by various means in the natural world, as by the reflected brightness of the moon, the brilliant ray of the sun, the burning of a torch or taper. And so it is also in spiritual things.

There are some who understand all mysteries and all knowledge; and attract the attention of their fellow-men and command their admiration, but their acquirements have been made by human instrumentality, or by the exertion of their natural powers. Their light is not immediately from heaven. It is the light of the moon, which neither warms nor fructifies, which neither restores the dead to life, nor makes the withered shrub again to flourish. A man may be thus enlightened,

and yet as far from the kingdom of God and his righteousness, as the poor benighted heathen.

There are others who appear to be in a somewhat better state. They possess light, accompanied by a certain degree of warmth. These are susceptible and easily excited souls, who, when they speak of Christ and his salvation, and the riches of his grace, or when they hear them described or discoursed of, are conscious of certain pleasing mental sensations and emotions, and also under such circumstances are penetrated by the thought, that these things must indeed be realities, and perhaps even give honour to the gospel, and so partake, in some degree, of the stream of living water, which flows through the church of God; but shortly their position being altered, and the influence which is made to bear upon them being different, their feelings and affections are changed with their new position, and "their goodness, like the morning cloud and early dew, soon passes away." "The cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lust of other things, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful," or "persecution and affliction arising, because of the word, by and by they are offended."

These are the foolish virgins who have no oil in their vessels with their lamps. The source of their light is soon exhausted, and they are again enveloped in darkness. Neither these, nor the others mentioned above, are, in the language of Scripture, said to be enlightened; for this description belongs only to those who have received their light, not by secondary or more remote means of communication, as from the moon, which conveys but a reflected brightness, or the flame of an expiring lamp;

but they are enlightened by the immediate rays of the "Sun of Righteousness, which arises upon them with healing in his wings," which "shines into their hearts, and gives them the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Christ Jesus." They hear the cry, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." They hear and obey. "Once they were darkness, but now are they light in the Lord," even to the inmost recesses of their souls. They not only see their misery, but also feel it, and like Saul, on his way to Damascus, are stricken to the ground.

When so enlightened, we are no longer satisfied with theory and speculation, but our knowledge is intimately connected with the life and practice, and our tongue is loosened. From the depth of our souls, the cry bursts forth, "What shall I do to be saved?" The Saviour is not only known, but also loved and revered. "To us who believe, he is precious," and we long to experience more and more of his quickening power. A thorough and entire change has taken place. The heart and life testify the reality of our religion. The fruits of righteousness are brought forth to the praise and glory of God. The work of the Spirit of God is apparent. "Old things are passed away, and behold, all things have become new." Here assuredly a work of grace is manifest.

And what is the second mark by which the individuals referred to in the text are distinguished? *They have tasted of the heavenly gift.* There is also another characteristic of the people of God. It is that of which our Lord spoke to the woman of Samaria, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee,

Give me to drink ; thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water : ” (John iv. 10.) It is that for which St. Paul gave thanks in writing to the Corinthians ; “ Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.” (2 Cor. ix. 15.) Christ himself is the heavenly gift. And can this gift be “ tasted,” that is, partaken of, as “ the bread of God, which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world ; ” be received by faith in his name, and with the delight of a pardoned sinner ; be enjoyed as his own, and yet the man be not a partaker of saving grace ? (Acts iii. 16.) No, no ; this description belongs not to the natural man. I do not say, that we may not know something of Christ, that we may not make a flaming profession, with no small degree of self-satisfaction, that we may not be moved by some of the gracious acts of the Lord, and feel a species of pleasure in the contemplation of the glories of his Person—I do not say, that this may not take place without our being in reality the children of God, partakers of a new and divine nature. But, to receive the whole gift of Christ himself, in all his offices, as the Atonement, the Saviour of the lost ; to enjoy Him in the soul with lively confidence as the Saviour from death, as the bread of life—this, brethren, is the experience of God’s dear children, for it manifests a sense of need, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and many other things which undoubtedly belong to such as have tasted and seen that the Lord is gracious, and who know the blessedness of those that trust in Him.

The persons under consideration are further described as having been *made partakers of the Holy Ghost*, an expression, I conceive, which admits of no

doubt as to its import. For, observe, the apostle does not say that the Spirit has knocked at the door of their hearts, soliciting admittance, but he expressly declares that they were made partakers of the Holy Ghost. The Spirit of God dwells within them. He enlightens their understandings, elevates their affections, and rules in their hearts. He is their teacher and comforter, which the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him. He moves them to prayer, and makes intercession within them with groanings which cannot be uttered. He lifts up their souls to the high praises of their God. He carries on the conflict within them against the flesh, with its affections and lusts, which they are thus enabled to mortify. He makes them more than conquerors over every enemy, through him that hath loved them. In one word, he glorifies the Saviour, taking of the things of Jesus, and showing them unto his people, sanctifying and sealing them unto the day of redemption, and making them meet for the kingdom of heaven. Thus have they been made partakers of the Holy Ghost. They have drank into one and the same Spirit, who carries on a work of grace within them, by which God is glorified. This is the meaning of St. Paul ; who then can doubt that he referred to such as are really the people of God ?

And that we may know for a certainty that he speaks of those who have received the Holy Ghost as the means and pledge of their salvation, and the earnest of their inheritance, he further adds, *and have tasted the good word of God*. They know by their own experience that the word of God is good, that, under all the varying circumstances of life, it is near us, to

counsel, and direct, to administer its friendly aid, whether of light or consolation. They can say with David, "How sweet are thy words unto my taste, yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth." (Psal. cxix. 103.) And again, "The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver." (Psal. cxix. 72.) To taste the good word of God can be the portion only of those that have fellowship with the Holy Ghost, who inspired the word, and applies it to the hearts and consciences of believers—who unfolds its hidden meaning, and makes it effectual, "for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.) They who taste the good word of God must assuredly belong to His family.

And now we come to their last distinguishing characteristic. They have tasted "*the powers of the world to come.*" And here, brethren, you may give full scope to your imagination. Think of the abundant effusions of grace from on high, by which the child of God is enabled to overcome this world, and the prince thereof; think of the lively foretaste of everlasting joys, and a transporting anticipation of heavenly blessedness; think of the vision of the things that shall be hereafter, the second advent of the Son of God, in power and majesty unspeakable; think of the assured expectation, the animating hope, the joyous realization of the believer, to be ever with the Lord; think of the victory, the exultation, the triumph, the everlasting jubilee, when death, and hell, and sin, and every enemy, shall be put under our feet, and sorrow and sighing, and all the evils of mortality, shall flee away; think of these things, and of what-

ever else of glory and of beauty the most lively imagination can possibly pourtray ; and all—all will fall infinitely short of that which is conveyed by the expression of the apostle, “to taste of the powers of the world to come.” And need I inquire whether they are the children of God, or not, to whom these things belong ?

O that every one of you, brethren, could trace these marks of the true believer in yourselves. We should not hesitate a moment longer to pronounce you “the blessed of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.” We should stand upon the mountain with him “which heard the words of God, which saw the vision of the Almighty,” and should take up his parable and say, “How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel. As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river’s side, as the trees of lign-aloes, which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar-trees beside the waters. Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee.” (Numb. xxiv. 5, 6, 9.)

II.

THE FALLING AWAY OF WHICH THE CHILDREN OF GOD ARE SUSCEPTIBLE.

St. Paul speaks of the children of God, and not, indeed, of mere novices and babes in spiritual things, but of those who have made considerable progress in the way to heaven ; and he refers to *the fall, of which they are susceptible* ; “if they shall fall away.” Fall away ? Yes, brethren, that is what he says, and nothing else. And

who is there that ought not carefully and earnestly to lay it to heart? for here yawns an abyss beneath our feet, which threatens to swallow up two of the most cherished tenets of our holy faith, and with them our dearest comforts; yea, the whole of our rest and peace—I mean the doctrines of free and unmerited grace and favour, and of our perfect safety under the protection of Jehovah; so that we “shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck us out of his hands.” (John x. 28.) For, in truth, the thought that our salvation is entirely dependent on our own power, is the grave of peace, and the source of never-ending anxiety.

But is it really said that we may fall away? Has not the word some other signification? No, dear brethren; none whatever. Nor does it alter the case that St. Paul, instead of expressly stating, in so many words, the possibility of such an event, only supposes it, “*if they shall fall away*,” as though he would intimate, this, indeed, never can be. He has no such intention. His meaning is obvious; that the falling away of the children of God is possible. It is not, indeed, of frequent occurrence, but it may take place.

Yet every fall is not a falling away—a forgetfulness of Christ, and turning away from following him. For *the word of God makes a distinction between a fall and falling away*. Of the former, occasioned by the weakness and infirmity of our nature, we read in Proverbs, “For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again.” (Prov. xxiv. 16.) Of this, which is frequently the means of great and special benefits to our souls, the apostle does not speak. In this matter let us judge

no man, for he is judged of the Lord. (Col. ii. 16.) And “who art thou that judgeth another man’s servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up; for God is able to make him stand.” (Rom. xiv. 4.) It is not, however, with the fall of the children of God that we have now to do, but with their falling away; and our subject demands a close and patient investigation.

Let me refer you to the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians, and the fourth verse. The persons whom the apostle addresses he characterizes as really awakened, as truly converted unto God, as having run well in the path of righteousness, and enjoyed the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free; and yet he tells them that Christ is become of no effect unto them; that they are fallen from grace. *From* grace, you will observe, is his expression, *not out of a state of grace*. And I would remark, by the way, that this latter expression, or any thing equivalent to it, I have never found in the word of God.

In what, then, consisted the falling away of these Galatians? It was in this, my brethren, as you will perceive by the context, that *they had departed from a state of Gospel liberty, and become entangled again with the yoke of the Law*. They no longer regarded themselves as mere recipients of grace, which wrought in them mightily, but imagined that they were themselves possessed of power, of which they had only to make use; rejecting the thought that they were but poor sinners, who must be saved only through the merits and righteousness of another, they supposed they could attain life by their own good works and deservings. They had lost the lively sense of their weak-

ness and unprofitableness, and instead of abiding under the cross, and living on grace and mercy, they had adopted the miserable expedient of being their own saviours, and asking in their own name, whilst they rejected the name and the advocacy of the only Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus : and instead of being judged and condemned in their own consciences, on account of their sins, and resorting with earnest importunity to a throne of grace, and fountain of mercy, that they might wash their robes, and make them white in the blood of the Lamb, they sought to heal their infirmities, and by legal observances to set up a righteousness of their own, and to establish a claim upon God by some fancied worthiness which their own hearts devised, and their own hands effected. So that St. Paul felt constrained to say to them, "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth crucified among you ? This only would I learn of 'you, received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith ? Are ye so foolish ? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh ? Have ye suffered so many things in vain, if it be yet in vain ?" (chap. iii. 1—4.) "Ye did run well ; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth ? This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you." (chap. v. 7, 8.)

This was a falling away—a falling from grace—a departure from the path of the child of God, to walk in that of the self-righteous natural man. It was a renunciation of Christ ; a silent, but not the less significant declaration, that they needed Him not ; that they would not have Him to rule over them. This

was a treading under foot the Son of God, and counting the blood of the covenant, wherewith they were sanctified, an unholy thing, and doing despite unto the Spirit of Grace. (Heb. x. 29.) And, therefore, St. Paul justly charges them, in my text, with crucifying to themselves the Son of God afresh, and putting him to an open shame. See here, my brethren, the falling away of the true Christian, and such, alas! as is sometimes to be seen in our own days.

But there is a falling away which is still worse than this, *not merely from grace to the law, but from God to idols*: from the kingdom of heaven to the world, and from the path of the Spirit and of light to that of the flesh and darkness. It is scarcely to be believed, and yet we have manifest proof of its reality.

You think, perhaps, that I allude to David at a certain period of his life. No, brethren: David's was a fall, not a falling away. But look at Solomon, that beloved servant of God, and accompany him through his whole course of life; an impression of dread and alarm must necessarily come over you. Behold the glowing writer of the Canticles, the master of wisdom in proverbs, the man full of faith and zeal—O, how greatly has he fallen? His queens and concubines have enslaved and perverted his heart, and he bows down before the idols of the surrounding nations. He forsakes the Lord, and worships Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Zidonians, and Chemosh, the god of the Moabites, and Milcom, the god of the children of Ammon. (1 Kings xi. 33.) He does that which is evil in the sight of the Lord, and builds idol-temples and altars, and goes with his wives to the high places to burn incense and offer sacrifices to

Moloch. Twice did the Lord appear unto him, commanding him not to walk after other gods, but he regarded not the voice of warning ; so that at length the Lord came against him with the lightning of his displeasure, and with a louder and more alarming call.

And alas ! have not some of the children of God been guilty of a similar defection. Are there not those to whom the world was once crucified, that have gone back unto the world—have not some who, for a long time, have been serving the Lord, now sunk into their former sinful state of life, which they had apparently for ever forsaken, and returned like the sow that was washed, to their wallowing in the mire.

Perhaps, there are some such unhappy ones among ourselves—some who formerly clave unto the Lord ; but the bond is now broken and dishonoured ! who once stood beneath the cross weeping, but now themselves crucify the Saviour ; who once were ranked with the humble penitents of the Scripture, with Peter, with the thief on the cross, and Mary Magdalene, but now they shed not a tear for their sins, and their hearts are as insensible as steel or iron ; who once delighted in singing the songs of Zion, the praises of the Lamb, but now have forgotten the Lamb and his precious blood, and mingle in the pleasures and occupations of the world and of Belial ; who once were the planting of the Lord to his honour and glory, but now are like the withered tree in the forest, dried up and bare, without blossoms, sap, or fruit. Alas ! perhaps such are to be found, even in our own congregation ; so that we have not far to go to seek for

them. And, if it, indeed, be thus, then we point at such among us, and say, "Behold in these is the proof that the falling away of the children of God is possible."

III.

THE WARNING.

And now, ye who have fallen away, hear *the warning which is given you* ; hearken to the voice of thunder which proceeds from the mouth of the apostle ; "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." O how terribly do these words sound ! They seem almost like that fearful sentence, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." (Matt. xxv. 41.) They do not, however, denounce a sentence of condemnation, but forcibly set before us how painful, how difficult, must be the restoration of those, who, having been rooted and grounded in the faith, and blessed with the sweetest manifestations of love from God, have afterwards relapsed into sin. Whoever, therefore, are guilty of such sin, may well fear and tremble. The word "impossible," in our text, is calculated to fill them

with horror and alarm. Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. O, watch and pray, and abide under the shadow of the cross. There lay you down to rest ; there awake in the morning. Let that be the spot of your daily employments, the scene of your active and careful preparation for eternity. There wait for the coming of the Lord ; there draw your last sigh ; then are ye safe.

I perceive an intense anxiety among you, my brethren, and many a heart heaves a heavy sigh. I think I am not mistaken. And what is the cause ? Ah, I know it well. Some of you deem yourselves guilty of this sin, and the word "impossible," as with the weight of a mountain, presses down your souls. Indeed, brethren, I feel acutely for you ; I mourn over your case. But have you really fallen away ? Yes, you think ; yes, we have indeed. And are you distressed on account of it ? Alas ! you exclaim, deeply, deeply distressed. And do you desire to be restored ? O, most earnestly, is your cry ; but it is in vain. We are lost for ever. We are unfaithful ; we are base sinners ; we have crucified the Lord of glory. It is impossible, impossible. This is the language of your soul. But stop : we know enough to say to you. Take courage ; be not dismayed. Your apprehensions are not well grounded. For you there is nothing but comfort in our text. Comfort ? Yes, brethren, comfort ; for observe what the apostle says. It is this ; that it is impossible "to renew them again unto repentance." But you, I conceive, are renewed unto repentance ; for what else is this your anxiety and trembling apprehension ? what else are these your

sighs, and cries, and tears, and this judging of yourself before the Lord? what are these but repentance and contrition of heart? There is no need, therefore, for you to number yourselves among those that have fallen away. Look at this obvious conclusion, consider its truth, and be comforted. In the name of God and his word I say, ye are in a state of grace. Is it not so, beloved, that you who are affected by overmuch sorrow on this account, may hope in God's mercy? But many among us still continue oppressed with anxiety. That word "impossible" presses down their souls as an intolerable burden, perhaps less on their own account than on that of others. A father mourns over his fallen son; a brother thinks of his brother that has grievously gone astray; a friend calls to mind his friend who is under spiritual declension; and, alas! the word "impossible" so affects their souls, that they gaze, as it were, into the bottomless pit, and behold their brother, son, or friend, given a prey to the merciless, the everlasting flames.

Wherewith can we speak peace to these, or what can we say to those whom we may have robbed of the delightful feeling of their security, or whose confidence we have shaken? The latter we would exhort to be the more diligent in watching and prayer; and to the former we would say, if those beloved ones, whose falling away you mourn, were the children of God, they are not lost. God will not cast away His people; and though your eyes and mine may not perceive it, though they themselves may scarcely be conscious of it, the loving-kindness of the Lord is not utterly taken away from them, (Psal. lxxxix. 33.) the Holy Ghost has not forsaken

them, for the promise made to the people of God is, that He shall abide with them for ever. (John xiv. 16.)

The word of God cannot be at variance with itself, nor are we at liberty to take a partial view of divine truth, and to rest upon one portion to the neglect of another. That which our Lord says in the tenth chapter of the Gospel according to St. John, still holds good ; “ My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me : and I give unto them eternal life ; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me, is greater than all ; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand ; ” (ver. 27—29.) And also in the sixth chapter, “ All that the Father giveth me shall come to me ; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which He hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.” (ver. 37, 39.) And that which the Holy Ghost says in our text is not opposed to these great truths. This I must briefly show you.

And let me call your attention to the exact wording of the text. It is not said that it is impossible for them *to be renewed* again, but it is impossible *to renew them* again unto repentance. You can easily appreciate the difference between the two modes of expression. A physician may say respecting a patient who is dangerously ill, “ it is impossible to restore him,” by which expression he would intimate that it is a case beyond the power of his skill to remedy. Should he presume to say that it is impossible for the man to be restored to health, he would say too much ; for

God, who possesses all power, can raise up and restore, even from the gates of death. In like manner, the apostle, in the expression before us, does not deny that there is any possibility of recovery, but he asserts that the means which at other times are made use of for the spiritual good of men, namely, the admonitions of love, the voice of warning, and the preaching of the word, are to those, who have fallen away, unavailing. The earnest call to repentance, the remonstrances of friends, and the promises and threatening of Scripture, fall upon these souls as dew upon the beaten path, and as rain upon the hard stone.

When, therefore, St. Paul speaks here of impossibility, we must regard him as having in view the means which are usually blessed in the awakening of sinners, "the word and doctrine," in the administration of which he was diligent, as the servant of Christ, but that he did not intend us to understand that God himself could not bring back one who was guilty of spiritual declension. No, brethren. The word which excites so much alarm is to be understood precisely in that sense in which it is explained in the tenth chapter of St. Mark's gospel. Our Lord there says, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." And when the disciples were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, who then can be saved? Jesus looked upon them, and said, "With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible." (ver. 25—27.)

But why does not St. Paul make a similar express reservation? He would warn us against security and

falling away, and therefore he uses strong language. But he is not at the same time unmindful of the weak and timid among the flock of Christ : and that he might not make the heart of him sad whom God hath not made sad, he more than once, in the immediate context, intimates that with God there is no impossibility to renew again to repentance his beloved children who may have fallen away.

And first, he does so in the third verse. He feared that some whom he addressed had fallen away, and gave them distinctly to understand it. He was therefore apprehensive lest his proclaiming the great mysteries of the gospel of which he desired to treat should be of no avail, that his words should fall as seed upon a soil that is utterly barren and fruitless. And yet he adds, that it was his wish to preach these great doctrines to them, *and this will he do*, he says, *if God permit*. But Paul knew that their hearts were closed against him ; he had just said that they had need of milk, and not of strong meat, and to be taught the first principles of the doctrines of God ; but he meant that what he could not do, God could bring to pass, namely, that he could move and restore the hardened and unfeeling souls of those who had faithlessly departed from him, and remained insensible under the preached word. This, his belief, he expresses covertly, indeed, but very significantly in the words, “ This will we do, *if God permit.*”

But does he not openly declare, in the eighth verse, that those who have fallen away are hopelessly lost ? He there compares them to the earth, which receiveth not blessing from God, and which beareth thorns and thistles. And what does he say respecting this earth ?

That it is *rejected*, and is *nigh unto cursing*, whose end is to be burned. These indeed are strong expressions, but to be *nigh unto cursing* does not mean to be *really cursed*, as to be *near death* is quite a different thing from being *actually dead*. The words, "whose end is to be burned," are unquestionably fearful, but these again are not so alarming as they appear to be. It would be far otherwise, were those who have fallen away compared to the *dry stubble*, which is cast into the fire to be burned. But they are said to be like *the earth*. And why do men in eastern countries apply fire to fields which are unproductive? Certainly not to destroy them and make them desolate, but on the contrary, to free them from weeds, to render them arable and fruitful. Even so, as the apostle intimates, does God deal with his dear children who have fallen away. They shall again be renewed to repentance, but as by fire, like the fearful judgment of dreadful visitations, like the flame of wrath and the torments of the lost, as it was with David and Solomon, and others, who have fallen away. Yes, with God nothing is impossible.

Are you still dismayed, my brethren? If it is yet a matter of doubt with you, whether the everlasting covenant of God, which is well ordered in all things and sure, remains fixed and unbroken, then read the remainder of the chapter. The apostle there treats of the truth and faithfulness of God, in a way which fills the heart with gladness and rejoicing. It seems as though it were his desire to raise up and exalt to heaven those whom he had first, by the thunder of his warnings, levelled with the earth. It is impossible, he says, for God to lie. Has he once spoken to us,

by the Spirit of his grace ; has he really promised to us poor criminals the joys of paradise ? then may we have strong consolation. These two things—his oath and his once promised word—can never fail. In these we have at all times an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil.

Behold, thus doth the apostle express himself respecting these great things.

For whom is this discourse designed ? For the careless and secure, in the first place ; and next for those who are of little faith and fearful. To the former, it addresses the voice of warning, to excite them to watch and pray, and abide under the cross, lest, before they are aware, they should wander far from God ; for it is a fearful and a bitter thing at last, as a field, to be burned, and by such a painful process to be renewed again to repentance—and for the latter it is designed, as a means of confirmation and establishment in the faith, that they may be comforted and encouraged, though they may have been unfaithful, and guilty of declining from God. For the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his. And, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. (2 Tim. ii. 19.) Yes, he knoweth them that are his.

Come then, ye citizens of heaven, however tattered, and torn, and disfigured, by your long wandering from the right way—come to a God, reconciled to man in Christ Jesus. As long as He shall see your names written on the tablet of the covenant, he will “ earnestly

remember you still, (Jer. xxxi. 20.) and though months and years may have passed away since you departed from him, He will, when you turn and repent, welcome you as friends, and you shall yourselves testify that you really had nothing to fear, for the love of God to his people is unchangeable. Faithful is he that hath called you, who also will do it. O let the faithfulness of God melt and subdue your soul, and so draw nigh to Him. His heart yearns over you to embrace you in love, to restore, to refresh, and comfort you.

Then let them come who weep, but yet believe,
For contrite sinners Jesus will receive.

Amen.

SERMON VI.

THE DEW OF ISRAEL.

HOSEA xiv. 5.

“I will be as the dew unto Israel—that he shall flourish as the Rose.”*

“O ISRAEL, return unto the Lord thy God, for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.”—Such are the gracious words of the Lord to his people; and the promises which he annexes to this call of mercy, and by which he allures them to himself, are sweeter than honey and the honey-comb; (Psal. xix. 10.) He will heal their backslidings. He will love them freely, for his anger is turned away from them. Yea, he will be as the dew unto Israel—that he shall flourish as the rose.

At this last promise to the spiritual Israel we will pause, to inquire into its import, and to refresh ourselves with the hidden manna which descends in this heavenly dew. (See Exod. xvi. 14.)

* The Lutheran version — which is retained, because the nature of the Sermon requires it.

Let us contemplate,

I. Christ under the similitude of the dew on Israel ;
and then,

II. The Church, as represented by a blooming rose.

I.

CHRIST THE DEW OF ISRAEL.

I will be as the dew unto Israel. How beautiful the comparison ! Many, doubtless, in this assembly, are now breathing the silent prayer—"O, my Lord and Saviour, be unto me as the dew of the early dawn."

Frequent allusion is made to dew in the sacred writings. Sometimes it represents great and special benefits ; "Therefore," saith the aged Patriarch to Esau, "God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth." (Gen. xxvii. 28.) Spiritual blessings are also thus described ; "The fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine, also his heavens shall drop down dew." (Deut. xxxiii. 28.) The fruitfulness and quickening power of the word of God is moreover set forth by this similitude ; "My speech shall distil as the dew." (Deut. xxxii. 2.) Sometimes grace is signified ; "The king's favour is as dew upon the grass." (Prov. xix. 12.) At other times, it is expressive of peace and brotherly union of spirit ; "Behold, how good, and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard ; that went down to the skirts of his

garments. As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion ; for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore." (Psal. cxxxiii.)

The morning dew, copiously diffused over the face of nature, brilliant, from the reflected light of heaven, as diamonds of the purest water, communicating freshness to the herbage, is an apt and beautiful emblem of the children of God,—the converts of Zion, who are born from above, numerous as the drops of morning dew. (Psal. cx.) The beauty of the Lord their God is upon them, and they are valued by Him as his precious jewels. (Mal. iii. 17.) The blessings vouchsafed to the places where they dwell, in answer to their fervent and constant prayers, descend as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the new mown grass. "The remnant of Jacob," it is said, "shall be in the midst of many people, as a dew from the Lord." (Mic. v. 7.) The Holy Ghost, also, with His manifold powers, gifts, and operations, is frequently represented by the same similitude. Whenever the Lord is described as watering his vineyard, and causing clouds to pass over it, and sending rain from heaven ; whenever we read of a river the streams whereof make glad the city of God, and refresh the wilderness and solitary place, the allusion is to the Holy Spirit, who is to the soul that which dew and rain are to the face of nature. "Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust ; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead." (Isa. xxvi. 19.)

When therefore, as in my text, the Lord thus speaks of Himself, we cannot mistake the meaning. He is Himself the dew ; for he is one with the Spirit. "The

Lord is that Spirit," says the apostle ; and again, " We are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord ;" or of the Lord the Spirit. (2 Cor. iii. 17, 18. See the marginal reading.) When Christ enters into a soul, the Spirit enters ; and has fellowship with us ; and so also has Christ, who is glorified in us, and gives himself to us with quickening power.

" I will be as the dew unto Israel." *How deep is the condescension which is intimated by this comparison.* It is as if the great design of the existence of God were the life and well-being of his people. And the same grace was manifested in the humiliation of Jesus during his sojourn upon earth. " The Son of man," said our Lord, " came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." (Matt. xx. 28.) And again, " I lay down my life for the sheep." (John x. 15.) He laid it down once upon the cross, and in another, and spiritual sense, he lays it down daily for us now. He lives for us, to make us partakers of his life, that we may live in him. The Lord of heaven and of earth, under whose feet are put all things, even He will be to us a dew—a refreshing shower poured upon the withered field of fallen nature ; O think, brethren, of this condescension, this love.

The Lord will be as a dew. This also intimates, *that there is a thirsty and fainting land, which he will render fruitful.* And such are we, till we have received life from on high. In vain shall we seek for any fruit in a soul, before Christ has given it life. How is the beautiful garden laid waste, the planting of the Lord within us. The fire of rebellion against God

has devoured the green foliage. It is a desolation, a dry and dreary desert, where only dragons and vipers dwell — thoughts and desires opposed to the God of heaven. Let any one seek there for the beauteous plant of heavenly love; it is utterly destroyed. Let him search for the luxuriant growth of filial confidence, of ardent devotion, and heart-felt delight in prayer; let him ask for the fragrant but lowly floweret of humility, whether it yet blooms? for the little plant of patience, whether it now grows? for communion with God, whether it is still cherished? Let a man inquire for power, and zeal, and inclination to do the will of God; for heavenly-mindedness; for the upward soaring of the soul.—Alas! how have we become a wilderness! That is fulfilled in us, which is spoken of by the prophet, “Thou daughter that dost inhabit Dibon, come down from thy glory and sit in thirst.” (Jer. xlviii. 18.) Our strength is withered away, as in the drought of summer. There is no verdure, no life in us.

And should any one seek to restore the lost verdure, as long as the wonder-working dew of God is withheld, his efforts are unavailing as water poured upon the burning sand. Let a man form good resolutions; let him preach or hear the word; let him read and pray; let him retire into solitude, or seek the society of the pious; it is all to no purpose, unless the Lord be with him: it is as when the rain or dew falls upon the paving-stones of the streets. But the Lord can even of stones raise up children to Abraham. He can make the wilderness blossom as the rose.

I, saith the Lord, I will be as the dew unto Israel. —Blessed be God that HE will be as the dew. The

dew is wont to fall, in the sultry night of summer, when the fields are dry and languishing ; and, in like manner, doth Jesus visit the thirsty soul. Go abroad into the fields on an early summer's morning. See how the dew sparkles in the valleys, how it lies upon the meadows as a sea of pearls ; but none has fallen upon the lofty hills. Thus, *whosoever would receive Christ must first be brought low* ; must, like David, cry unto God out of the Depths. (Psal. cxxx. 1.) "Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly, but the proud he knoweth afar off." (Psal. cxxxviii. 6.) "To this man will I look, saith the Lord, even to him that is poor and of a contrite heart, and that trembleth at my word." (Isaiah lxvi. 2.) God is wont to make a man lowly before he visits him with his quickening and refreshing power. Every mountain and hill shall be brought low before Him. The Saviour of men loves the valley of humiliation.—How well did He know how to bring down the pride in the woman of Samaria ; "Thou hast had five husbands, and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband." (John iv. 18.) At once she was convicted of sin ; and sensible of her poverty and wretchedness, she looked around for a deliverer from among the people. Then it was that Jesus said unto her, "I that speak unto thee am He ;" (verse 26.) and from that time she was renewed in the spirit of her mind, and changed both in heart and life. She was the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified.

And it is ever thus. The dew of God falls from above. He opens the clouds of heaven, and wherever he finds valleys and depths among the hills, empty, and helpless souls, there he sheds abroad his sacred

influences. "The hungry he filleth with good things, but the rich he sendeth empty away." As Joseph was a type of Christ in his whole life, so was he also in this, that he was cast into a pit which was empty.

It is in the stillness of the night that the dew descends from heaven. We hear no sound, we see no brightness ; but in the morning it is suspended from the leaves, and we know not whence it came, nor how it was placed there. So is it also with Christ. The manner of his coming is hidden in darkness ; who can lift up the veil ? His approach is also, for the most part still and noiseless ; not with sound and ceremony, not with visions and wondrous manifestations, not with a voice from heaven, and pomp and parade apparent to the senses. Or ever the sighing and waiting sinner is aware, He says to him, Behold, I am He. No host of angels has entered his chamber, no audible voice has been heard through his window : he has seen no vision, nor has any light from heaven shone around him, as around the shepherds on the field of Bethlehem ; but within his soul he has heard the gracious announcement, "Behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy, for to you is born this day the Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." The Spirit beareth witness with his spirit ; and this is the witness that God hath given unto us eternal life, and that this life is in his Son. His conscience also testifies that he has partaken of the fountain of grace opened to the house of David and inhabitants of Jerusalem : he knows that Christ is his Saviour. The dew has gently fallen in the calm and silent season of the night ; but in what manner we know not ; yet the sinner feels that it is there : and *we* also perceive, in the whole course of his

life and conversation, that Divine grace has descended on his soul.

The dew upon the tender grass is distinguished for its brightness. It reflects the light of heaven. And thus also, when Christ has found admission into our soul, amidst the deepened sense of our sinfulness, He appears glorious in our eyes; and the more close our communion with him, the more do our misery and utter helplessness become apparent. Hence the cry of the believer: "Alas! what am I, my Saviour: I daily discover more evil in my state." But thanks be to God, as the dew adorns and beautifies that on which it falls, so does Christ cover our misery with his righteousness, which is glorious like the curtains of Solomon. (Cant. i. 5.) There is no condemnation, saith the apostle, to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (Rom. viii. 1.)

And *O how fertilizing is this dew!* It gives life to the dead soul. It makes the wilderness to rejoice and blossom as the rose. How great is the change which is effected, when, after a long and sultry summer's day, the morning dawn unfolds itself, and sheds abroad its blessings upon the fields. We see nothing then faint and withered; the flowers and herbage lift up their heads; all things are adorned with beauty, as in the season of spring, and the fragrance of life is wafted through the air. But yet greater and more glorious is the change, when Christ, the dew of God, descends upon a heart, or upon a whole household, as in the case of Cornelius.

How wretched and barren the heart of man, till Christ is there. How unhappy and lifeless its condi-

tion. The world possesses all—the mind, the will, the affections. The thoughts are winged only toward the flesh-pots of Egypt. The desires and hopes go upon the ground, like the serpent, and eat the dust. The mouth speaks only of the gratifications and employments of time. The whole life and being of man—his joys and griefs, his hopes and sorrows, are estimated by this world and its vanity ; his entire state is mean and grovelling, without God, without light, destitute of heavenly mindedness, full of sin. Angels cannot endure such a sight.

But, behold ! *Salvation comes to this house.* The Saviour sheds his blessings from on high. Now come and see what a change has been effected. “The glory of the Lord filleth the house.” How sacred has the place become ; worldly mindedness is expelled, and the gentle spirit of humility and love occupies its room, and the conversation is in heaven ; earthly inclinations are dislodged, and the thoughts, wishes, and desires are now wings, wherewith to fly upward. The treasure is now elsewhere, the heart is elsewhere also. Other bread and water are now known, and other is the thirst and hunger. The man has attained another state and condition, and his language and course of life are consequently different. He is spiritual, and all things are now spiritually discerned and estimated ; and his chambers are perfumed with the frankincense of prayer and praise, ascending day and night as a sweet smelling savour before the Lord. His state was before dreary, and void, and desolate, and darkness was upon the face of the deep : but the Spirit has now moved upon the face of the waters, and light has broken in, and the soul stands glorious in the

bloom and beauty of the new creation. This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the work of Him who says, in my text, I will be as the dew unto Israel. O that he were such to all of us !

But observe, my brethren, *that dew, precious as it is, may become injurious to the fields.* This is the case, when it falls on a cold and chilly atmosphere. Then, congealed into frost, it destroys, vegetation. And thus has Christ been unto many the savour of death unto death. So, for example, did he become to Judas a chilling frost. Of this the wintry atmosphere of opposition and obstinacy in Judas was the cause. All that Jesus did by word or example, by gentle allurements or by warnings, to gain an entrance into the heart of Judas, hardened his heart more and more, and accelerated his destruction. Christ was not the cause of this, but Judas himself.

May God preserve every one of us from such a state ! God forbid that that which alone can give life eternal, should in the evil atmosphere of our soul be changed into a withering frost !

O let him who has received this refreshing and fructifying gift, rejoice and give thanks to God. But *some of you, perhaps, mourn the absence of the dew* after which you thirst. For many days and weeks, it may be, you have not been able to perceive its sweetness, nor rejoice in its communications from on high. See that, under such circumstances, you mistake not your state. For the dew is not unfrequently withheld from the souls of God's dear children. Then do the plants of love and peace, of confidence and joy, droop and hang down their

heads. There is no life for prayer, praise, or giving of thanks. But only wait awhile. God would now show you the value of the dew. When his hour is come He will return again to you, and give you inwardly to experience its gracious effects.

And *O how great the joy when the treasures of heaven are poured forth after a long, sultry season!* Then you first learn rightly how to estimate the mercies conferred on you, and by faith perceive and acknowledge in your own soul, that the Lord alone is as the dew unto Israel.

II.

THE CHURCH A BLOOMING ROSE.

As Christ represents himself in my text under the similitude of the dew, in like manner does he compare the church, and also each individual believer, to a rose. “I will be as the dew unto Israel—that *he shall flourish as the rose.*” This expression is also highly significant.

The rose is a lovely flower, second to none in sweetness and beauty. As the nightingale among birds, the rose is among flowers, the most eloquent in the praises of the Creator. It utters no vocal sound, nor does it rustle, as the palm of Elias, or the cedars of Lebanon, and yet it seems to be formed to give glory to its maker. Thus, too, Israel, whose seed shall live for ever, a rose in the great wilderness of

man, created for God's honour and glory. "The Lord hath redeemed Jacob," saith the prophet, "and glorified himself in Israel." (Isa. xliv. 23.) And St. Paul declares, that God hath "predestinated us unto the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved." (Eph. i. 5, 6.) Believers are his workmanship, born of his water and his Spirit. His is the light which enlightens them; His the grace which is made manifest in their conversation. Yes, all that is bright and lovely in their character is from God, the darkness only belongs to themselves. The Urim and Thummin, which they bear upon their breast, has been placed there by God; and the language of their hearts is, "Not unto us, O Lord, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy and for thy truth's sake." (Psal. cxv. 1.) The power of His grace is displayed in all who are born again to his honour and glory. "We have this treasure," it is said, "in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." (2 Cor. iv. 7.)

How wondrous, how mysterious, are the ways of God. For observe *who are they that shall flourish as the rose*. Poor, contrite sinners, who are conscious of nothing good in themselves; miserable outcasts, such as took refuge with David in the cave; weak, dispirited men by nature, who have neither power nor will of their own to make any effort—the lame, the blind, the destitute, who lie in the street at the threshold of His door, and live on the crumbs of bread which fall from His table. And the great and the rich, the honourable and the powerful, (namely, those who deem them-

selves as such) are but as weeds. A believer, however deep may have been the dye of his sins; a poor Lazarus lying in his leprosy; a publican pricked to the heart, and crying, God be merciful to me a sinner; a penitent thief upon the cross—Such sinners He receiveth (Luke xv. 2.) From these he ordaineth praise. Such is the wonder-working power of God. But, truly, they are not saved by Him for the sake of any thing in themselves, nor for any humility or piety they may be supposed to possess; but He regards them as his own, because they are found in Christ, and are clothed with the garment of his perfect righteousness. By his grace he hath made us accepted in the Beloved.

The rose has a delightful fragrance. Thus the Lord says [by Ezekiel, “I will accept you with your sweet savour, when I bring you out from the people, and gather you out of the countries wherein ye have been scattered, and I will be sanctified in you before the heathen.” (Ezek. xx. 41.) And it is said, respecting the church, in the Song of Solomon, “the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon.” (iv. 11.) This reminds us of Jacob, when, by subtlety, he obtained the blessing. He clothed himself in the “goodly raiment” of Esau, and drew nigh unto his father; (Gen. xxvii. 15.) then, it is said, Isaac smelled the smell of his raiment, and blessed him, and said, “See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed.” (ver. 27.) And thus is it with regard to ourselves. We are as a sweet savour unto the Lord, only when clothed in the beautiful garments of our elder brother; we are accepted in the Beloved.

The rose is red; in this respect also is it an

emblem of the spiritual Israel. St. Paul speaks, in the tenth chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, of our "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus;" and again, in the twelfth chapter, he makes mention of "the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." As Moses sprinkled all the people with the blood of the sacrifice, so are the children of God sprinkled with the blood of Christ, their passover, that the destroying angel may not touch them. (Heb. ix. 19, 23; 1 Pet. i. 3.) Their faith looks to his atoning blood. "The shield of the mighty men is made red," saith the prophet Nahum. (ii. 3.) This may be regarded as applying to the shield of faith. Their hope springs out of the obedience of the Saviour, his obedience unto death. Their prayers and praises are sprinkled with his blood, for thus only do they draw nigh unto God. The fountain of their love is the bleeding cross. They would glory in nothing else, save Jesus Christ and him crucified. He is their all and in all. All their works are done in the believing apprehension of the blood of the cross. Thus do they possess the colour as well as the fragrance of the rose.

When a rose has lost its lovely hue, it is a sign that it is hastening to decay. This holds good also with reference to the Christian. If he cease to cry, with David, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean, wash me and I shall be whiter than snow;" (Psal. li. 7.) if he neglect to have recourse to the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness; if he begin to think lightly of the offering of the Mediator, and venture without it to approach the Father, it is an evil token—a sign that the worm of pride is gnawing at

the root. The more rich the colouring, the greater is the indication of life ; the more indispensable appears to us the blood of the covenant, the better is the state of our soul.

The rose is seldom without a thorn. And what says the bridegroom in the Song of Solomon? "As the rose among the thorns so is my beloved." But what are the thorns? They are the many afflictions, both external and within, to which the children of God are subjected in this world. And thus must it needs be. They are hedged in, that they may not wander out of the right way, and that they may be protected from many dangers. Without his sufferings the graces of Lazarus would not have shone forth so brightly ; and Paul, without a thorn in his flesh would have been exalted above measure. Whenever the church of God has been subjected to severe persecution, the beauty of the Lord has been most upon her, and her comeliness unfolded to the view.

And now observe, in the last place, *the source whence the rose derives its loveliness and growth.* It toils not, neither does it spin, but it waves gently in the sun-beam, and opens its cup to the dew of the early dawn ; thence its fragrance and beauty, in which it surpasses every flower of the field. Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of them. Here do we receive instruction. Our toils and labours are of no avail : we cannot change and renew ourselves. In this consists our life ; that we walk in the light of Jacob ; that the day-star from on high visits us ; that we "lift up our eyes unto the hills from whence cometh our help ;" (Psal. cxxi. 1.) that we repair

to no fountain but that which is opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, (Zech. xiii. 1.) and daily and hourly draw from thence living water. (John iv. 10.) Happy are they who have no other care than every moment to abide under the beams of the Sun of Righteousness, and be moistened with the dew which distils from heaven. Happy are they whose eyes rest continually on the good Shepherd, that he may give them their portion of meat in due season; that he may open his hand and satisfy them with good things. They shall never be permitted to want. Their bread shall be given them, and their water shall be sure.

Wouldst thou, O Israel, flourish and blossom as the rose? Unfold thine heart under a deep sense of thy need to Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness, and to the dew of heaven which descends gently from on high. So wilt thou be, as the rose in the season of spring, lovely, fresh, and fragrant; and in thy words and actions, in thy prayers and praises, and thy holy conversation, will men recognize the brightness and the glory of the heavenly dew.

O come, then, Lord and Saviour, be unto us as the dew! On all those who are still as withered plants, and, continuing such, must at length be cast into the fire and burned, let the power of thy Spirit be manifest, as once on the rod of Aaron, which though dry and lifeless, yet, in one night, "brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds." (Numb. xvii. 8.) May we all flourish as the rose. And when-

ever Thou shalt come to us to call a soul hence to thy eternal mansions, may it be said in heaven, "Behold, my Beloved is gone down into his garden to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather roses." (Sol. Song vi. 2.)

Amen.

SERMON VII.

THE SAVIOUR'S JOY.

A SERMON FOR CHRISTMAS DAY.

Prov. viii. 31.

“ Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth ; and my delights were with the sons of men.”

THERE can be no great difficulty in finding the solution of this mysterious subject. The chapter from which our text is taken furnishes it amply. It shows us plainly that the allusion is to essential Wisdom, or the Son of God. Our Lord bears, in many passages of Scripture, the name of “Wisdom.” He says of himself, (Matt. xi. 19.) Wisdom is justified of her children ;” and again, (Luke xi. 49.) “Therefore, also, said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles.” And Paul declares, that “God hath made Christ unto us Wisdom.” (1 Cor. i. 30.) In our text, also, something is stated respecting Christ, the Wisdom of God, which, especially in the light of the joyous season of the nativity, it is not difficult to understand. Let us proceed, then, to consider the subject thus

brought before us. And first let us observe the latter clause of our text.

I.

“MY DELIGHTS WERE WITH THE SONS OF MEN.”

O how bright and rich the meaning which flashes from these words upon our minds. They are like a costly jewel, which, however you may turn and examine it, is on all sides beautiful, and ever sends forth new rays of life and lovely colouring.

Our Lord here informs us, that HE had delights—peculiar and special enjoyments. And *where had He these delights?* Where else, you say, than where the tree of life flourishes, and the streams of living water flow ; (Rev. xxii. 1, 2.) where the crown of glory encircles his brow, and ten thousand times ten thousand, with their golden harps, stand around his throne. (Rev. xiv. 2.) But no ; his heart is elsewhere ; “ My delights were with the sons of men.” You think, then, that he speaks of the beginning of time, and the last day of the creation. Aye, then was it indeed good to dwell among men ; for it was pleasant to walk amidst the trees of Eden, when the inhabitants of the earth were pure and undefiled. (Gen. ii. 8.) Nor yet, brethren, is this the time of which our Lord speaks ; but he alludes to a period when all the foundations of the earth were out of course ; (Psal. lxxxii. 5.) when the imagination of man’s heart was only evil from his youth, (Gen. viii. 21.) and the whole human race dead in trespasses and

sins, (Eph. ii. 1.) tied and bound by the fetters of the wicked one, (2 Tim. ii. 26.) and, bending under the wrath and curse of the Almighty, (Eph. ii. 3.) had sunk in deep mire, where there was no standing, (Psal. lxxix. 2.) and the pit was about to swallow them up. (Psal. lxxix. 15.) Well, therefore may we be astonished that, under such circumstances, the Lord of Glory should say, "My delights were with the sons of men."

"My delights"—*What, then, is implied in this expression?* Many things, beloved; and, in the first place, that which, from the beginning, was His chief joy, His highest and most exalted pleasure. And what was that? *It was Jesus himself*; for he alone is lovely, and worthy to be loved; and every thing else is beautiful, only so far as it partakes of his beauty, and is derived from him. (Ezek. xvi. 14.) For he is the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. (Cant. v. 16.) The rays of his own perfections delighted his eyes.

And these delights "were with the sons of men." Yes, where else should they be?—With the angels, perhaps? They have their own glory, but the glory of Christ is among sinners. Wonderful as it may appear, it is, nevertheless, a reality; and still more wonderful that it is so. He has disrobed himself of his kingly purple, (Phil. ii. 7.) and given it to his flock. (Rev. i. 6.) He would not retain his white linen for himself alone, but presented it to his bride, (Rev. vi. 11; vii. 14.) for her beautiful garments; (Isa. lii. 1.) he has decorated the "worm Jacob" (Isa. xli. 14.) with His splendid attire, with His jewels, and chain, and crown. (Ezek. xvi. 10—13; James i. 12.)

How, indeed, could we have such confidence, if His

righteousness did not cover our sins? How could we dare to lift up our eyes to Him, before whom the heavens are not clean, if we did not know that we are clothed with the purity of the most pure, and with the holiness of the alone holy? How could we, who are as weak as bruised seeds, with so much boldness, encounter the devil and all the powers of darkness, were we not assured that we are enrolled among the kingly hosts of the Saviour? How could we calmly anticipate the fiery tempest of coming judgment, were we not, from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot enveloped with His perfect obedience? (Rom. v. 19,) and could we not draw near to God, relying on His wisdom, His love, His glory—as if it were our own?

There are many, perhaps, who may think that to be arrayed in the merit of another, and to shine in borrowed light, is altogether easy. It may be; and yet how few are content to be saved in this way—the only way of salvation. This privilege is, however, ours. Father, says our blessed Saviour, briefly, but in words which cannot be misunderstood, “The glory which thou gavest me I have given them.” (John xvii. 22.)

As the great delight of the Lord Jesus is in his own perfections, so is the pleasure not less which he derives from *the operations of his hands*. “The Lord,” says David, “shall rejoice in his works.” (Psal. civ. 31.) But where are his works manifested?—with the devils in hell? God forbid. Their state has been determined by themselves; their condition is the result of their own unhallowed devices.—With the angels in heaven? By no means. The crown has not fallen from their head, nor has the lustre of their original glory been sullied.—With the virtuous and righteous according to the flesh?

Far otherwise. They have acquired their fancied goodness of themselves, and must depend on themselves for its preservation.—

But, where a publican strikes upon his breast, “God be merciful to me a sinner,” and a Bartimeus cries out by the way-side, “Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me ;” where a woman of Canaan speaks of herself as a dog desiring the crumbs under the table, and a poor Magdalene would weep day and night at the feet of Jesus ; where a Paul exults in that he has obtained mercy, and a Peter professes with trembling lips, “Lord, thou knowest that I love thee,” and a Job declares, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him”—Behold ! where such things come to pass, and similar emotions are manifested ; where stony hearts are made as potter’s clay in the hand of God, and brazen brows become as wax, that he may impress his mark upon them ; and glassy eyes are changed into a gushing fountain, the waters whereof flow towards the East ; where the righteous begin to rejoice over the ruin of their rightcousness, (Isa. lxiv. 6 ; Phil. iii. 8, 9.) and the wise over the destruction of their wisdom ; (Jer. ix. 23, 24.) where poor sinners acquire a heart to love Him, and the workers of iniquity are changed, and with joyful lips are enabled, before these accusers, to make mention of Christ as their Advocate, and Spiritual Head—there, there beloved brethren, is his work, and where his work is, there is his delight. Thus are his delights with the sons of men, and especially with his poor penitents. On them his eyes rest with pleasure. That which a beautiful prospect is to a lover of nature, or an exquisite painting to the admirer of the arts ; the same is the new creature in a sinner to our Lord and Saviour.

He is never weary of beholding it, for it is the workmanship of his hands.

Have we now seen the full meaning of the first words under consideration? No, brethren; more is contained in them. The Lord expresses himself with brevity; but such is his ordinary method, to say much in a few words, whilst we are wont, with many words, to say but little. "My delights," he says, "were with the sons of men;" but he withholds one word, viz. "*to dwell*." And why does he withhold it? Is he ashamed to give expression to all his love towards poor sinners? No; you know not our Saviour. What does Paul declare concerning him? "He is not ashamed," he says, "to call us brethren." Nor is he ashamed to dwell among us, for that is his delight; "For thus saith the high and lofty one, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." (Isaiah lvii. 15.)

But, blessed Saviour, how can thy pleasure be in that world which is the scene of thy greatest displeasure? How canst thou delight to dwell where no man seeks his delight in thee?—no man, certainly, of himself—and how canst thou rejoice in those who cannot but distress and grieve thee? It must, however, be so; for he again repeats, "My delights were with the sons of men."

And that this is *not a transient emotion*, but a deeply rooted and eternal affection, hundreds and thousands of years without intermission, from the beginning of the world to this very day, abundantly declare.

For consider, *the tender concern which a God of love manifested towards man before He had yet created him* ; for He called not into being in a moment this lord of creation by a word of his mouth and an act of power, as he did all other creatures ; but as a potter maketh a vessel unto honour, and with great care and close attention fashioneth it ; so the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground in his own image, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, the breath of the holy and ever-blessed God ; then man became a living soul.

And *scarcely were our first parents placed upon the earth when the Saviour was also with them*, walking in their company among the trees of the garden. Then you think, then all was well. Nothing that was opposed to God at that time existed among men ; nothing that could disturb the harmony. But if I tell you that it was through our fall and our sin, that his delight to dwell among us gained strength and warmth, how will you give credence to the assertion ? yet it was so in reality. For then the bowels of his mercy began to yearn towards us ; and then first did that which Zechariah says bear its full sense and meaning ; “Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord : for he is raised up out of his holy habitation.” (Zech. ii. 13.)

And now, dear brethren, *I would go back with you to the period of the old covenant*, and show you how the Saviour, from the beginning, went in and out among sinners, and erected his habitation among men who are dust and ashes. (Gen. xviii. 27.) I would accompany you into that wilderness where He found Hagar, an Egyptian maid, and addressed to her words

of tenderness. (Gen. xxi. 17—21.) I would conduct you further, into the plains of Mamre, and disclose to your view the wondrous sight of the Lord of Hosts sitting, in the heat of the day, under the shade of the trees with our father Abraham. (Gen. xviii. 1—8.) I would go with you to Bethel, (Gen. xxviii. 19.) and thence to Peniel, (Gen. xxxii. 30.) and to Horeb, where the Lord revealed himself to Moses in the burning bush. (Exod. iii. 1 ; xvii. 6.) Then I would open, if it might be, for a moment, the pillar of cloud and of fire, that you might there behold His face. (Neh. ix. 12 ; Psalm xcix. 7.) Forty years long did He thus conduct them, as their guide and protector, though they were a stiff-necked people. O, is it not wonderful? What is there wanting here of delights with the sons of men? And now I would pass onwards with you to Ophra, where with Gideon, you might behold the Saviour of men sitting under an oak. (Judges vi. 11.) Then I would repair to Jerusalem, where, over the mercy seat in the temple, He dwelleth between the cherubim. (Exod. xxv. 22 ; Psal. lxxx. 1.)

This would I do—But, dear brethren, *what need of journeying so far?* He is near at hand. Where are we to-day? Are we not at Bethlehem? (Luke ii. 4—7.) O look then into the stable and the manger. What do you behold there? “A child.” Yes, a child; and indeed the same that has said, “My delights were with the sons of men.” God incarnate—in a manger—in swaddling clothes—at a mother’s breast—“Great, great, is the mystery of godliness!” Here the mind can proceed no further: the knees tremble, and the heart is filled with amazement; the wonder is too great for the weakness of human nature. It is

well that our eyes are dim-sighted ; it is well that we behold it only from afar, and scarcely understand the thousandth part thereof : it would otherwise deprive us of our lives ; it would overpower us ; we could not endure it.

Yes, though the intercourse of the Son of God with Israel was sweet and refreshing, it cannot be considered, in the full sense of that expression, as His dwelling among men : it was, as a relationship, too distant, too cold a friendship. He, the God of heaven, and they poor sinners—the disparity was too great. *He thence became incarnate*, a child, our kinsman, our brother. Yet all that we can say respecting this great mystery is as nothing ; for even the seraphim, who now for nearly two thousand years since this great event have looked into this abyss of love, and vainly tried to fathom it, and who never cease from their astonishment, and the matter of all whose hallelujahs is derived from the cleft rock of the living fountain—even they cannot fully declare it.

But *what moved the great God to humble himself thus?* Nothing but his love to man. “My delights were with the sons of men.” But whence were they derived? Whence but from Himself? Here we have traced love to its source. Higher we cannot ascend.

And now, brethren, I would briefly observe to you, that though the Saviour is no longer cradled in a manger, yet *he still bears the human form*, and is our Brother, even to the present hour, though he again sits upon his throne ; and he has the same tender heart, having been tempted in all points like unto his brethren, that he might be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, and sympathize with us, and succour

us in our distress. And though we cannot take up in our arms the holy child Jesus, as did Mary and Simeon, yet his delight to dwell with the sons of men has not diminished, and his communion with us is equally near; yea, much nearer and more intimate. And he does not merely tarry for the night, but he dwells with us as one of the household; and therefore he says, that though he is ever in the high and holy place, yet he is also continually among his people upon earth. He taketh up his abode with us.—O let us praise the Lord.

And *how doth he dwell with us?* Is it as a superior in rank, who deems it a sufficient honour to mingle in our society, that we may offer him our services, and from whom we are to expect no service in return? Far otherwise. He has himself said, that He is as one that serveth. (Luke xxii. 27; John xiii. 4—17.) O how precious is the Saviour, how worthy of our love! Doth He then dwell with us as a counsellor, whose advice we may ask in matters of great moment? But why *only* in such? He would that we should regard him as one of the family, and He gladly receives us and resolves our doubts, in little as well as in great things. You should lay all your concerns unreservedly before him, and not think that you are permitted to communicate with him only respecting spiritual things. I say unto you, that he will be careful of the meal in the barrel, and the oil in the cruse. (1 Kings xvii. 14.) He will inquire after the provision which is made for your wants; (John xxi. 5—13.) and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. (Psalm lxxxiv. 11.) O, if you would believe, you should see the glory of God. “What

nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for?" (Deut. iv. 7.) He is about our bed and about our path; He would have us take no thought what we shall eat or what we shall drink, nor wherewithal we shall be clothed, for HE careth for us, and knoweth that we have need of these things. (Matt. vi. 31, 32.) His delights are with the sons of men.—And yet more, for He is described in my text, as,

II.

"REJOICING IN THE HABITABLE PART OF HIS EARTH."

The Son of God here expresses the joy which he received from dwelling among men. And why should we doubt that the Saviour literally rejoiced among the inhabitants of the earth? Was he not once a child, like other children, in all things the same, sin only excepted? Was there not a time when his heart had never been oppressed with any burden, nor his eyes suffused with tears; when his infant feet were not wounded and bleeding by the thorns and thistles, which grow on the path to the altar of sacrifice; and the cross, and shame, and death, and all that was before him, were concealed within the veil of futurity? He was no wayward or fretful child, but serene and affable, and therefore, as we are informed by St. Luke, he grew in favour, not only with God, but also with men, and the mutual endearments between a child and his mother must have been exquisitely enjoyed by him. And the angels of God may be sup-

posed to have come down, not only to witness, but also to participate in these joys.

We may well imagine the existence of such delights, when the aged Simeon took up the little child in his arms, and his soul was so transported, that the old man became himself almost a child again, and embraced the Holy Babe, and leaped, and wept, and smiled, at the same moment, feeling that nothing more was left for him to desire, for his eyes had seen God's salvation.

But more is contained in the expression. It leads us to think also of the *day of creation*, In the verses preceding our text, it is said, "When he gave the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment; when he appointed the foundations of the earth; then I was by him, as one brought up with him, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him." What would the Son of God teach us here? What else, than that He created the world not only with wisdom, but also with love; not alone for the use and benefit, but for the happiness and joy of the children of men, of whom even then He thought with tenderness.

Yes, dear brethren, as the Lord clothed the flowers of the field, and decked the lilies with their festal garment—as He suspended the azure canopy in the heavens, and beautified the fields with living verdure—as he lifted up on high the lofty mountains, and formed the peaceful valleys among the hills—the quiet lonely dales with their cool and shady brooks; as He gave their cheerful notes to the songsters of the grove, and to those which fly heavenward with the voice of praise—as he adorned and diversified the workmanship of his hands, with

such decorations and embellishments, with such lovely hues, and sweet and melodious sounds, and goodly prospects ;—in all this we see the Saviour's delight and rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth. And since He has so determined, that the external objects of nature should be as a sacred volume, which we can only partially understand ; since He has made the creatures to be as shadows and representations of invisible and spiritual things, and comprehended all high and eternal truths therein, as in pleasing emblems and pictorial delineations, which it is our privilege to read, even in the present day ; since He has appointed the sun to be an image of himself, and set forth in its effects his own operations in the kingdom of grace ; since He has decreed that the corn of wheat, in that it dies, and puts forth its tender blade and fruit-bearing stem, should teach us that, “except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God ; and since He has made the butterfly, which, with beautifully painted wing, rests upon the rose, to be a joyful herald of the resurrection from the dead, and of the future glorious liberty of the children of God :—in these things, brethren, in all these, which are His own works, is the Son of God made manifest, as rejoicing in His habitable part of the earth and delighting with the sons of men.

And that which we behold in his works, we are taught also by *His dealing with the children of men*. See how he condescends to our ideas, desires, and expressions. Thus, in his word he is not ashamed to accommodate himself to our weakness, but employs language adapted to our infantine condition. “For whom shall he teach knowledge, and whom shall he make to understand doctrine ? Is it not them that are

weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts? And therefore precept hath been given upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line, here a little and there a little. And with stammering lips and another tongue doth he speak to this people." (Isa. xxviii. 9—11.)

Behold how He stoops to our conceptions and modes of life. He draws near to us. He comes down to the level of the comprehension and understanding of poor blind sinners who are but dust and ashes. Observe how in one place he speaks of "repenting;" and yet he cannot in reality repent; in another place, he assures us that his heart yearns towards us as that of a tender father; and again, to reveal to us our future glory, the representations are taken from the sources of human delight and pleasure, from banquets and marriage feasts, and beautiful houses and palaces; from brilliant stones of varied hue, and precious metals; from green trees and pleasant fruits. Is not this condescending accommodation to our thoughts and imaginations an illustration of our text, that the great God rejoices in the habitable parts of his earth, and his delights are with the sons of men? And truly, whoever has not found God thus revealed in his word, is ignorant of the God of the Bible.

And now recall to mind *the manner in which God is wont to bring near to us the mysteries of his will*, and how he strengthens our faith in his word and promises. He places before us, as is our custom with children, all kinds of beautiful pictures, and figures in various colouring, to attract and fix our attention, and thereby he enlightens our mind, and enables us to consider and understand that which would otherwise be beyond our apprehension. Thus,

for instance, that we may retain with freshness in our memories the promise which he gave to Noah, and be assured of its certainty, he has suspended in the clouds a lovely bow, painted with seven colours, to which we may direct our eyes; and he tells us, that as often as he shall look upon this bow, he will remember his promise that he will no more destroy the earth by a flood; as though God must needs place a memorial before his eyes, lest he should forget his word of promise. But he knew that this would minister to our comfort, and tend to confirm our faith. Thus, again did our Lord very graciously condescend to the weakness of Gideon, when He acceded to his request, and so quickly and readily performed that strange mystery which Gideon besought of Him, as a new sign under the promise he had received from the Lord. First, the dew was to be upon the fleece alone, the earth around it remaining dry; and then the fleece was to be dry, and all the ground covered with dew. (Judges vi. 37—39.) And God did both these things, just as Gideon requested. How much tenderness and kindness is here!

But the things of God have all a deep signification. Thus, as the Lord in the rainbow of Noah, depicted with fine touches for spiritual perception, an emblem of the promised Mediator, so did he intimate, by prophetic representation, in that miracle with which he pleased Gideon, *how* He would, in after ages, visit mankind with the heavenly dew of his appearing, and of the out-pouring of his Spirit. First, the dew of his grace was upon Israel alone, whilst the whole of the earth beside was dry, and afterwards, the dew was diffused over the whole of the earth, Israel alone being dry, as it is to this day.

Look again at the tabernacle and temple of Solomon. There, by multitudes of allusions and shadows, and cunning works of certain signification, did wisdom bring near to the Jews all the great and blessed mysteries and truths of God. And to us also, she speaks, in like manner, by the sacraments of Baptism and the Supper of the Lord, and by the rite of Confirmation. Is there not, in this, evidence of the delights of the Lord with his weak children, who have need of something sensible and perceptible that they may be able to know and believe? And how much grace and loving-kindness is manifested therein!

Let me now remind you of *God's daily dispensations towards us*. By them he designs to teach us important lessons, the attainment of which should rather be sought than the indulgence of superfluous sorrow or distress, whenever we are brought into painful circumstances. Thus, for instance, the Lord sometimes hides himself from our view; we are then ready to think that he has forsaken us and forgotten us; but He would teach us our entire dependence upon himself, and when he hears our voice entreating his return, he lifts up the light of his countenance upon us, and gives us peace.

Again, our former sins, which we have long thought to be buried in the depths of the sea, arise before our view in fearful array, and we tremble, as at first, when awakened to repentance. Our first love has, perhaps, grown cold, and He would thus rekindle it in our souls.

Now, He sets before us the greatness of our misdeeds, and we become fearful of his wrath; but his design is to manifest more fully the sweetness of his grace, and the all-sufficiency of his merits and righteousness

At another time, He permits our enemy to stretch forth his hand as if he would seize our crown, and also suffers him to attempt to shake the foundation of our comfort and our hope beneath our feet. We cry in the agony of the disciples in the storm, "Lord, help us, we perish." But the danger is not so great as we apprehend. He has brought us into such a state, that we may grasp more firmly that which we have, not, as we imagined, that we should lose it.

And when, by various means, He gives us counsel in dark parables for our conduct, that thereby, as also by reason of use, our spiritual senses may be exercised to discern both good and evil; (Heb. v. 14.) and when He makes use of apparently the least important circumstances in our life, that by means of them he may speak to our heart something consolatory, instructive, or profitable; when He selects ordinary subjects, arising from our every-day conversation, and, with Divine wisdom and skill, makes them the channel for conveying a rich and full supply of manifold spiritual mercies, or converts them into tablets on which he inscribes a doctrine, or warning, an encouragement, a promise or historical incident of his word; when He so tenderly has respect to our most trifling desires, and in the most minute circumstances surprises us by the ready communication of his counsel and blessing; and, in our reading the Holy Scriptures, when He takes, if I may so say, the least significant passages, and by them instructs us in the deep and mysterious things of God, conveying them to our souls with lively apprehension and quickening power—when such is the method of God with us, we are furnished with additional proof of His rejoicing in the habitable part of

his earth, and that his delights are with the children of men.

To allude, in conclusion, to the lovely tones which issue from the tabernacles of the righteous—HE, *who is the Wisdom of God is the source of all harmony*. All music upon earth, but that which proceeds from Him, is dissonance in his ears, and like the hoarse croaking of the raven. As it was HE who gave the harp of David its heavenly sound, and touched its strings upon the hill of Bethlehem, and sang the pleasant Psalms with the voice of the royal Psalmist ; so is it HE who, even in these days, opens the lips of the spiritual choir, and gives the full tone and sweet expression to their voice ; it is HE who awakens the melody in their hearts, and moves the hidden chords of their soul with the breath of his mouth. He is in their soft and solemn sounds, and in their lofty songs of praise. He speaks within them in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs. He is in their loud cry to the cross, and their rejoicing on the hill of the sealed ones ; (Rev. vii.) yea, He is in every Alpha and Omega of the new heart, in every Hosannah of sacred homage, in every Hallelujah of heavenly joy, and in the great universal temple-chorus of his sacred worshippers ; “Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Amen.” In all this the Lord himself is manifest—the Lord and his Spirit. It is He that plays and makes melody on the harp of our souls ; and only those songs to which He himself gives utterance within us, fall harmoniously on his ear, however weak and imperfect they seem to ourselves.

Behold, my brethren, thus doth the Lord rejoice in the habitable part of his earth, thus are his delights

with the children of men. Happy, truly happy, are the people who have the Lord so nigh unto them, and to whom he manifests himself in such tenderness and love ! Of such is the kingdom of God. Forget not that the great and the wise, namely, they that consider themselves such, are not of that number. Hear the voice of Christ himself, “ Verily, I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall in no wise enter therein.” (Luke xviii. 17.) Let us then be children, dear brethren, little children. Towards such is the desire of Immanuel ; only among children will he dwell. And wherever He dwells, surely it is good to be there, it is already a heaven in the wilderness ; and therefore has it been said,

And be my home a straw-built cot,
Yet happy will I deem my lot,
If *there* THOU dwell'st with me ;
Or bid me go through deserts waste,
E'en to the stake, I'll joyful haste,
If guided there by THEE !

How sweet this little verse ! When will the Lord enable us to adopt it as our own ? May it be very shortly ! May the name of Jesus become more precious to us, more loved and honoured every day ; and may we know and possess, more and more, the joys and delights which He shares on earth with his dear children, his adopted ones ; and, finally, may we participate in the glories of His kingdom.

Amen.

THE
TEMPTATION OF CHRIST
IN THE WILDERNESS.

WE stand to day on that memorable battle-field where those laurels were won which encircle *our* brows, and that triumph was achieved which makes us victorious before the conflict, and even in death more than conquerors, through him that hath loved us. (Rom. viii. 37.)

Never was there a battle fought more wonderful in its nature, more important in its consequences, nor one which so deeply affects our everlasting interests.

It is good for us to sit down awhile, and give ourselves to the absorbing contemplation of this great sight.

I.

THE LEADING INTO THE WILDERNESS.

TOGETHER with the consecration and anointing of our Lord to the mediatorial office by the water of the Jordan, and the baptism of the Holy Ghost, did Jesus receive from heaven the divine testimony that he was the only begotten Son of God in whom the Father was well pleased. (Matt. iii. 16, 17.)

The Sonship of our Lord, and his essential unity with the Father, appear to have been to him, in the days of his flesh, more an object of faith than of sight, perception, or feeling. At moments, at least, he could, in such a manner, conceal his Godhead from his view, and hide it in the back ground, that he apprehended it only in simple faith on the bare word of the Father.

It was not for the disciples only, but for himself also, that the voice was heard on different occasions from heaven, "This is my beloved Son"—for himself, to strengthen his faith, which, sometimes, as for instance, when he was forsaken of the Father on the Cross, was bare and simple trust in the Father's love, without any sensible experience of that endearing relationship. (Matt. xxvii. 46.)

Consecrated and divinely invested with his priestly office, Jesus immediately hastened into the depths of

the wilderness. He who led him, was, according to the evangelists, the Holy Ghost. (Verse 1. Mark i. 12.)

Was the Saviour aware for what purpose the Spirit led him into the wilderness? Perhaps only in part; the great and special cause the Father may have concealed from him. We learn also from our own experience, that it is not always the will of the Holy Ghost to make known to us beforehand his designs in leading us.

He not unfrequently conducts us in entire darkness. We are conscious of his inward call, "Arise, and depart to such a place, or in such circumstances, or at such a time." We ask, "why? for what purpose?" but receive no answer. The command is only given yet louder, and with more urgency in our heart, "Go, haste, delay not." We inquire again, what can be the meaning of this internal impulse, but it remains a mystery. We must proceed in darkness, and should we object, the probability is a tumult in the conscience, and a bitter feeling of the divine displeasure in our soul. We must go, we are obliged, and not till afterwards is made known to us the reason. (John xiii. 7.)

Here, Philip finds a chamberlain who has been awaiting his exposition of the Scriptures, (Acts viii. 27.) and there, Elijah meets a widow, whose soul he should enrich with heavenly treasure. (1 Kings xvii. 10.) At one place a disconsolate brother cries to us, even when yet we are a great way off, "Ah, you come to me as an angel sent from God;" and in another place it is made manifest to us, in a different way, wherefore the Spirit hath called and sent us: either the sun arises upon our path, and all becomes clear and bright around us, or

the Spirit gives us some slight intimations of his purpose; but all beyond this, and that which is most important, he keeps back, hidden from our eyes.

One says, I must retire to my chamber to pray, or go to such a house to succour and assist an afflicted brother, or to a particular place to render some special service; but of all that which is designed for us in such places, more than the service, assistance, or prayer—that we shall wrestle with God, (Gen. xxxii. 24.) or become humble and contrite in spirit, (Isaiah lvii. 15; lxvi. 2.) or pass through the purifying furnace, (Mal. iii. 3. Isai. xlviii. 10.) or meet the hosts of Mahanaim, (Gen. xxxii. 1, 2.) or whatever it may be—of all this no mention has been made to us. It shall become known to us hereafter in the way of experience.

It seems to have been thus with our Saviour. *He went into the wilderness half in light and half in darkness.* Perhaps he knew only generally, that he must go into the wilderness to fast, suffer want, and endure hardship, and in the depths of extreme humiliation and poverty enter upon the work of his priesthood. So much the Spirit unfolded to him, but the severe, the fearful temptation which awaited him appears, according to the counsel of the Father, to have been carefully hidden from his view. The unexpectedness of the assault would add severity to the conflict, that the triumph might be the greater and more glorious.

II.

THE FAST.

JESUS went into the wilderness to fast. So far extended his light at that time, and yet farther—to its great design, its mysterious signification. Was not then the fast of Jesus in the special plan of him who led him into the wilderness? By all means. That he should be so tried was according to the purpose of God, but only a part of it.

Do you ask, then, *on what account it was necessary that Jesus should fast*, and why in such a dreadful solitude so painfully, so long—forty days and forty nights? In reply, I would remark, that it was of a very different description from that of Moses on Mount Sinai, and other saints.

The fast of Jesus was something more than a devotional exercise and preparation for the priestly office, it was an initiatory work of sacrifice. The key, not only of the temptation, but of the fast of our Lord, is to be found behind the gate of a lost paradise. It is an expiation for Adam's eating of the forbidden tree, (Gen. iii. 6.) an atonement for his guilt, a satisfying passion.

Did the progenitor of the human race dwell in the

happy plains of paradise? We behold the second Adam in the desolate wilderness. Did the first man, who was of the earth, earthy, (1 Cor. xv. 47.) live amidst lovely trees and delicious fruits in the garden of Eden? The second man, who is the Lord from heaven, must endure hunger in a wilderness, amid stones and rank weeds, where not an ear of corn grew to relieve the extreme necessity of his nature. Did our forefather enjoy the most delightful communion with God and the holy angels, and the society of his spotless wife? Jesus, on the contrary, was banished into the most gloomy desert; he was with the wild beasts, as Mark informs us, (Mark i. 13.) and with the old serpent, with Satan and his angels. O, how great the contrast! But thus it was ordained of God.

Our Surety and Representative, by fasting and suffering want in the dreary and inhospitable wilderness, *made atonement in the sinner's stead, for the sinful presumption with which Adam, in the face of an express divine warning and threat, stretched forth his hand to the fruit of the forbidden tree.* This he did for his people, and they have no farther atonement to make to all eternity.

But you by whom the everlasting satisfaction of the Lamb of God is not estimated aright; you see in the circumstances of our Lord in the wilderness, a true portrait of your own coming destiny. Thus must you ever dwell in the eternal wilderness, and when you are an hungered, they shall thrust a stone into your mouth instead of bread; and when you shall suffer thirst, you must swallow flames instead of water, and you shall live as though among wild beasts and hissing

serpents, and you shall be alone, in solitude, amidst the multitudes of the damned, for in hell there is no endearing intercourse nor friendship; there, hate and selfishness bear sway, and each one is too much engrossed with his own pain and suffering to sympathize with another. And the duration of this misery is called ETERNITY.

With this truth one would suppose we could make rocks leap from their everlasting beds, and hills tremble. But your hearts do not tremble. Alas! they are harder than the stony rock.

Fasts are also observed in the kingdom of God; bodily and spiritual fasts, of various kinds, painful and joyous.

The most joyous are celebrated *in the spring-time of the new life*, at the beginning of conversion, after the first assurance of divine grace, after the first manifestation of love from the heavenly bridegroom, when God calleth the young child out of Egypt. Then it is not needful to urge us to self-denial. All this is done at once and without solicitation. How does the man fly as with wings from the scenes of pleasure and dissipation of an infatuated world; how can he "fill his belly with the husks that the swine do eat," (Luke xv. 16.) after he has drunk of the wine of the "goodly land," and partaken of the "milk and honey" with which it flows? (Deut. iii. 25. Exod. iii. 8.) How can he take pleasure in the sounds which control the dance, or in the song of the voluptuary, after he has heard the harp of David struck by his kingly hand? How can theatrical representations and the tricks of the juggler afford gratification to any one, after he has seen heaven with all its glory opened

before him? and how can he any longer recline upon the couch of ease and of revelry, when he has beheld Him whom his soul loveth suspended on the accursed tree, bleeding and crowned with thorns? Away, then—away quickly with the shadow of your pitiful delights, and with the tinsel of your vanities. This is our day of fast.

It is often a subject of debate and inquiry, whether certain pleasures or enjoyments are compatible with Christianity or not. Let us cease to ask such questions, and become Christians, then shall we know what is consistent and what is not, and how far one that is born again, an heir of God and his kingdom, may proceed in such things.

There is yet another fast in a state of grace, and one of a more painful description, *when the soul is led, not from the field of the world to the green pastures of the Lamb, but from the latter into the wilderness*, and this is a very bitter reverse. We were—ah! how unspeakably happy, in the bosom of Jesus. Such sweet sensations and emotions, such tender delights and pleasures, such touching and affecting apprehensions of the grace and nearness of our Saviour, pervaded and filled our souls, that we earnestly desired, from this blessed foretaste of heavenly joys, to pass at once into their full fruition in paradise.

The south wind blew upon our garden, and the spices thereof flowed out; (Cant. iv. 16.) the grapes of Canaan refreshed our lips, and the pleasurable sensations of love distilled like the dew of the early dawn upon our soul. O, how abundantly were we satisfied—the sorrows of this world were utterly forgotten. But, before we were aware, a fast was ap-

pointed, and the bridegroom was taken from us. (Matt. ix. 15.) The fountains of milk and honey were dried up, and the soul, deprived of her refreshment, sat motionless, with her harp unstrung, upon the glowing sand, thirsting for the dew of heaven to fall upon the parched ground.

These are the fast-days of the child of God in the wilderness. *Happy is he whose comforts are derived from Christ and his word, and not from feelings and emotions.* “Bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure,” (Isaiah xxxiii. 16.) If he has not sensible perception, he has, at least, faith; and if he is destitute of feeling, yet the ground of his confidence is secure. He shelters himself beneath the rock of the sure promise of his God, and he knows that though the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, yet God’s kindness shall not depart from him, neither shall the covenant of his peace be removed. (Isa. liv. 10.)

And *this fast in the wilderness, when it is of God’s appointment, is good and wholesome.* The same love which dispenses our food to-day, leaves us to-morrow to suffer hunger, and keep a day of fasting and abstinence. What more do we need, if only to the hand of grace we look for guidance? Let it lead us as it will.

III.

THE TEMPTATIONS.

JESUS went into the wilderness to fast, but yet more than this was designed in the purpose of God. What says the evangelist? “*Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.*” These are fearful words. The Holy Ghost leads the Son of God into the presence of the devil, and for what purpose? In plain and unequivocal words it is written, that he might be tempted of the devil. How remarkable. But this dark and wondrous event speaks comfort to you, O ye heirs of the kingdom. It would encourage your hearts, ye troubled souls. It is recorded for your instruction.

Let none among you suppose that he who goeth about as a roaring lion is free and unrestrained, and can fall upon you when he will; that he can launch his darts according to his pleasure; and lay his snares unperceived by the captain of the hosts of the Lord. (Jos. v. 14.)

Far otherwise. Our leader has him ever in his sight, and holds him firmly bound by his strong word. Even Satan himself has found what the Preacher

declares, that "the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong." (Eccles. ix. 11.) In vain does he attack any respecting whom Jesus has said to him, "touch not mine anointed." A wall of fire encircles such an one by that word of his Master; a protecting wall over which the fiery darts of the wicked one can find no passage. (Zech. ii. 5.) But every assault of Satan is by the express permission of the Lord Jesus, (Job i. 11, 12,) and consequently for the spiritual good of the believer; and the line is pointed out by the kingly sceptre, with minute exactness, how far he may go, and no farther. What power, then, doth the wicked one possess? He is led forth and made a show of openly, and Immanuel triumphs over him in himself. (Col. ii. 15. marginal reading.) Henceforth he is among those principalities in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, which must bow to the sceptre of Jesus. (Eph. i. 21; Phil. ii. 10.) The Lord employs him as he did a Nebuchadnezzar, a Korah, and other outcasts, as a rod in his hand, for the good of his people; and when he has made a sufficient use of this terrible scourge, he will break it in pieces—he will lay hold of the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil and satan, and shut up and seal him in the bottomless pit. (Rev. xx. 2, 3.)

Rejoice then, ye little flock of God, that the devil is under the direction and control of the Good Shepherd, and is made use of only for your benefit.

As often as the fiery darts of the wicked one hiss around you, remember, beloved, that it is the Lord, even the Spirit, who has led you into the wilderness, who has placed you in the conflict, and who is himself your strength and shield.

All the temptations of the children of God are

permitted for one great purpose, they shall *make manifest the graces concealed in their souls.*

Sometimes it is pleasing to the Lord *himself to behold these hidden things brought to light.* For he delighteth in his work.

It was when our father Abraham had, in every respect, completed the preparations for his painful offering on Mount Moriah, that the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, "Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me." (Gen. xxii. 11, 12.) This our Lord well knew, but he wished to make manifest the fear of God which he had wrought in his heart, and which it was his delight to behold.

And so must many of the children of grace, in our own day, be tried and tempted, that the Lord Jesus may witness their perseverance in prayer, and hearing of the word; the storm is sent, that the Lord may behold them believingly pass onward over the troubled waters in their right course, and himself conduct them to the haven of peace. (Mark vi. 47, 48.) It is this that gives him joy.

We ought not, perhaps, to speak thus to those afflicted ones. They would think that we were mocking, for they perceive in themselves no graces in which the Lord should delight; but they are seen and acknowledged of him.

Frequently doth the Lord suffer his children to fall into temptation, not so much himself to behold that which is concealed in their hearts, as *to make it manifest to their brethren and sisters.*

For this end he reveals to us the faith of Abraham, the patience of Job, the love of Moses, the zeal of Elijah,

the humility and ardour of the woman of Canaan, that we may give glory to his power, which has wrought so mightily in the feeble children of men.

But are we disheartened, and do we think, that such holy ones may well expect an entrance into the kingdom of God, but what hope is there for us? Then he brings at one time a David, at another a Peter, before our view—grapes from which, in the wine-vat, were extracted not only wine, but the bitter waters of sin; and such a sight restores our confidence, especially when we hear that Simon is not the less called “a stone,” and David “a man after God’s own heart.”

And so has it often been, that men, from whom holiness beamed forth with especial splendour, and who, beyond others, have enjoyed the high estimation of the church, have yet at length, under the power of temptation, been so shorn of their beams and goodly colouring, and their weakness and sinfulness have become so manifested; or, to change the figure, from a noble stream they have dwindled into an insignificant brook, which loses itself in the sand; that when compared with that which they once were, we can scarcely recognize the same individuals.

This the Lord permits to take place, that mortal man may beware of idols, may keep his graces bright, and give honour to Him only to whom it is due.

One great benefit of the temptations to which we are subjected is, that we may learn more of ourselves, that we may see the sin that dwelleth in us, and humbly lie in the dust. (Rom. vii. 17.)

We children of men too easily deem ourselves righteous, but Jesus calls the ungodly and sinners to repentance. We too quickly ascend the mountain, but

Jesus would see us in the valley. He would humble our pride. And therefore it is, that he suffers the devil, for a little while, to stir up the sink of our corrupt nature, that the noisome odour may invade our senses, and the brood of serpents and vipers, which lay lurking beneath, may crawl upon the surface before our eyes. The Lord permits the wicked one at times to arouse tumultuously the swarm of unrighteous thoughts and desires which slumber in the inmost recesses of our souls, that we may be sensible of the evils with which the temple of God is infested, and never think of pride or boasting more. He suffers the devil sometimes to invade us, and to blow the trumpet to awaken the evil propensities within. How do we wonder that they are there. We had thought that we had long ago banished them by our holy exercises, and that the house was rendered clean. But now we find it quite otherwise.

When so humbled, the bride is again conscious that the false colouring has faded from her cheeks, and is, in her own estimation, as at first, black and without comeliness, and lies low in her first repentance, and loves with her first love. (Cant. i. 5. Rev. ii. 4.)

There, breaks at once beneath our feet the topmost step in the ladder of our sanctity, and not even the lowest will serve to support us any longer, but we lie upon the ground, and are conscious that we are poor sinners, such as, perhaps, we had never seen ourselves before.

Robbed of our decorations and ornaments, we hide ourselves with shame out of sight, and again rejoice from our inmost soul that another will clothe us with a wedding garment, that a cross was erected on Golgotha, and that one sits upon the throne who is not only called Righteousness, but Grace.

IV.

THE DESIGN OF OUR LORD'S TEMPTATION.

WE have already seen why God permits his children to be tempted.

The inquiry then arises, *on what account did he suffer the Lord Jesus to be so tried?* And here do we most solemnly protest, on the outset, against that most degrading doctrine, which irreverently declares that Jesus was placed in the fire of temptation, that he might, by wrestling and praying, overcome the sins which he bore in his flesh and in his members. No, we cannot endure to hear this of our Saviour.

That he appeared *in the likeness* of sinful flesh, we allow; but it was only in the likeness, not in the sinful flesh itself; (Rom. viii. 3.) and if he was in all points tempted like as we are, yet was there one point excepted, namely, sin. (Heb. iv. 15.)

Blessed be God, that his word does not leave us in doubt as to this matter. *With our Mediator's perfect and entire freedom from sin stands or falls the whole building of our Gospel hope.* Were the white linen of his righteousness stained with the smallest speck of ungodly emotions, could any one prove this to us, then might the churches be closed, the Bible burnt, our confidence cast away, and despair prevail.

For then would Jesus not be our Saviour, and the price which he has paid would be inadequate and unsatisfying.

The temptations which beset our Lord were very different from those which we are wont to experience. He encountered them, not for himself, but for us, and in our stead. They belong to the sufferings connected with his offering *as our substitute.*

We saw Adam tempted by the serpent, but he wantonly permitted himself to be hurried along by the overwhelming torrent. The second Adam, to atone for this, sustained a more painful assault, broke the spears of the enemy, signally overcame the adversary, and yielded to the Father a perfect obedience.

Adam, through disobedience, became the prey of the devil; the second Adam bore for him the curse, descended from the throne of the majesty on high, to mingle with wicked spirits in the regions of the lost. Unexampled humiliation! The Almighty God touched by the murderous hands of Satan! the King of the Universe hissed at by the old serpent! the Most Holy beset and surrounded by the powers of darkness! and the Lord of Hosts a sport for the cursed spirits of hell, and tempted and challenged to that which is most sinful! Most horrible situation for the Son of God! the most appalling that we can imagine: for we are placed by nature nearer to the devil, who, as our Lord declares, is, in our natural state, our father, (John viii. 44.) we bear his likeness, and therefore his foulness is not so abhorrent to us as it must be to him who dwelleth in light, and is himself the light. (1 Tim. vi. 16. John i. 9.)

Truly no small anguish must it have been to him

thus to dwell in the midst of devils. But even to this pool and pit was the Son of God obliged to come down, and thus the wild boars of Belial encompassed him with their terrors, that a payment might be made for the enormous guilt that man had heaped up; and amid such resisting powers and obstacles was he necessitated, alone, in strife and battle to do the will of God, and with the glories of his perfect obedience to cover the disobedience of Adam and his seed.

Another design of the temptations of Jesus was, that he might become for us a High Priest touched with the feeling of our infirmities. Such, indeed, he could have been without experiencing the assaults which we must endure; but now that he has made such a display of his love, we poor children of men can more easily believe in his sympathy, and we can with the greater freedom pour out our heart before him, and show him all our complaint.

When two men meet who can speak of the same trials and of the same buffetings of Satan, O what better preparation can there be for an intimate union, for a free communication, and tender sympathy? They pour out their souls to each other. Their hearts overflow, and the time passes rapidly.

In the presence of one, on the contrary, who has never felt as we have, we are mute. We have no inclination to communicate to him our state, since we fear that he can neither understand us nor feel for our case. And we should certainly have felt much more distance with our heavenly friend, if he had not become a partaker of our sorrows.

But now the thought affects us deeply that he himself was tempted in all points like as we are, and

knows by his own experience the most bitter anguish of our souls. If then no man understand us, we have a friend near at hand to whom we need only unfold our state and circumstances, and he knows at once how to encourage our souls.

His fellow-feeling extends even to the darkest night of the soul, the most fearful depths of internal suffering and distress.

You can sit under no juniper-tree beneath which He has not already sat ; no thorn can wound you which has not made His heart to bleed ; no fiery dart can strike you which has not first been hurled at His sacred head. Why then should we doubt of his compassion.

Yes, believe it only, beloved, whenever you lie in the furnace ; the eyes of the refiner are upon you, (Mal. iii. 3.) and the heart of the High and Holy One, whose love is more tender than a mother's, bleeds over you for sympathy in heaven. (Isa. xlix. 15 ; Heb. iv. 15.)

These then, with respect to the world of sinners, were the great designs of mercy and love, in subjecting the Son of God to the fire of temptation.

But it may be inquired, *whether God had not some reference to the tempter himself?* and this we shall be able to answer the more readily, when we clearly understand the position which that fallen prince of angels sustains in the kingdom of spirits.

That satyr-like figure, with horns and hoofs, which is assigned him by popular tradition, has no reality : it is far from the truth, and partakes more of the ridiculous and contemptible, than of that which is great and terrific.

But read and compare together the several scattered notices which the Scriptures in many places afford

respecting these fallen morning-stars, these first of created beings; observe their character and features, which the word of God incidentally depicts, and there is a certain awe and wonder, which, at the sight of the prince of hell, you cannot shake off.

He is that leviathan of whom the Lord speaks, (Job xli.) "Canst thou draw out leviathan with a hook? or his tongue with a cord which thou lettest down? Canst thou put a hook into his nose? or bore his jaw through with a thorn? Will he make many supplications unto thee? Will he speak soft words unto thee? Will he make a covenant with thee? Wilt thou take him for a servant for ever? Wilt thou play with him as with a bird? or wilt thou bind him for thy maidens? Shall thy companions make a banquet of him? Shall they part him among the merchants? Canst thou fill his skin with barbed irons, or his head with fish spears? Lay thine hand upon him, remember the battle, do no more. Behold, the hope of him is in vain. Shall not one be cast down even at the sight of him?"

He is that powerful one of whom testimony is given. "None is so fierce that dare stir him up. Who can discern the face of his garment? or who can come to him with his double bridle? Who can open the doors of his face? His teeth are terrible round about. His scales are his pride, shut up together as with a close seal. One is so near to another, that no air can come between them. They are joined one to another; they stick together, that they cannot be sundered. By his neesings a light doth shine, and his eyes are like the eyelids of the morning. Out of his mouth go burning

lamps, and sparks of fire leap out. Out of his nostrils goeth smoke, as out of a seething-pot or caldron. His breath kindleth coals, and a flame goeth out of his mouth. In his neck remaineth strength, and sorrow is turned into joy before him. The flakes of his flesh are joined together; they are firm in themselves, they cannot be moved. His heart is as firm as a stone, yea, as hard as a piece of the nether millstone. When he raiseth up himself the mighty are afraid. By reason of breakings they purify themselves. The sword of him that layeth at him cannot hold, the spear, the dart, nor the habergeon. He esteemeth iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood. The arrow cannot make him flee, sling-stones are turned with him into stubble. Darts are counted as stubble: he laugheth at the shaking of a spear. Sharp stones are under him; he spreadeth sharp pointed things upon the mire, he maketh the deep to boil like a pot, he maketh the sea like a pot of ointment. He maketh a path to shine after him: one would think the deep to be hoary. Upon earth there is not his like, who is made without fear. He beholdeth all high things. He is a king over all the children of pride."

Behold, these are the features of this powerful Spirit, who, with regard to his original glory, is nothing more nor less than the idol of the rationalists.

In these great and wondrous ruins of his former glory doth Satan give praise to him who created him. For who is his equal in knowledge and wisdom? who in perseverance, and energy, and power? And yet that which we perceive in him is but the remains of his original splendour. He is set forth in the Scrip-

tures as possessing a certain majesty, not only because he is called a lord, a powerful one, a prince, but also the God of this world. (2 Cor. iv. 4.)

Observe how the apostle Jude speaks of him.—“ Michael, the archangel, when contending with the devil, he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, ‘ the Lord rebuke thee.’ ” (Jude 9.)

In the Book of Job we see Satan standing among the angels and spirits, around the throne of God. (Job i.) And the Lord speaks to him, and inquires whether he had considered his servant Job, and after the subtle insinuation of the accuser; “ Doth Job fear God for nought?” the Lord gives him power over all that Job had. And thus the devil learned, by this trial of the servant of God, how the strength of the Almighty was made perfect in Job’s weakness.

We might almost say, that it was important to God that even this prince of darkness should acknowledge him, and give him honour. And it was so in reality. For it is written, that every knee should bow to him, and every tongue confess that he is God. (Phil. ii. 11.)

And thus, by the temptations of Jesus, was the devil enabled to glance at the sources of the atonement, to see the Lamb of God in his purity, without blemish, to behold the surety in his power, to discharge our debts. Thus also would he learn that Zion is redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness, and not by an arbitrary act; and that no well grounded objection can any more be made against the salvation of sinners.

When the most wise and acute of all the spirits is constrained to admire the wisdom of God—is silent before his counsel—is compelled unwillingly to praise his mighty acts, then doth it redound not a little to the majesty and glory of the Eternal.

In the great day of judgment, and of the manifestation of God, that must be one of the most sacred and solemn moments in which Satan will be compelled openly to acknowledge that honour and praise are due to the Lamb; and when one God, if we may so express it, with trembling reverence shall bow the knee to another. It will be an utterance of praise to God of no less power and greatness than the Hallelujahs of the heavenly host.

V.

THE TEMPTER.

FORTY days and nights had the Lord spent in the lonely desert, fasting, and afterward he was an hungered.

Then came the devil to him openly, but clothed as an angel of light.

He had a two-fold object in view ; first, clearly to ascertain whether Jesus were really the Son of God : and, if he should prove to be so, he meant, if possible, to hurl a rock upon him in the way, and for ever mar his work of saving souls.

I am greatly disposed to believe that which has already been advanced by others, that *the tempter was as yet in doubt as to the identity of the Messiah.*

Jesus had now passed thirty years in the deepest seclusion. The son of a carpenter, he had learned his father's trade ; “ in the sweat of his face did he eat bread ;” (Gen. iii. 19.) he lived plainly, and did and said nothing beyond that which other children of men might have said or done. No one supposed that he was more than an amiable person ; and, perhaps, Mary and Joseph were not a little tried in their expectations respecting him, and awaited a voice from heaven.

God veiled his Son so completely, that even the

piercing eyes of Satan might not recognize him in this plain carpenter. Yet the devil could not altogether overlook him.

Among men, no one thought that this simple workman at Joseph's bench could be the Messiah. But Satan was prudent enough not to trust too much to the external appearance of lowliness and poverty. He thought it possible that this carpenter, notwithstanding his outwardly low condition, might, nevertheless, be the Lord; and many things seemed to indicate that thus it was.

He found nothing inconsistent in the supposition that the Redeemer, in such a state of poverty, should commence his task; and many circumstances appeared plainly to indicate that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God. Something of this kind he suspected. As yet he knew nothing certain. He longed for the time when all doubt would be removed.

Had Satan known that Jesus of Nazareth was in reality the Messiah, there would be many things inexplicable in his method of proceeding towards him, as we shall hereafter perceive.

Thoroughly to ascertain this point, whether Jesus were the Christ, was the first aim of the tempter. And so cunningly, at the same time, did the subtle spirit plan his temptation, that if Jesus should prove to be the Messiah, he hoped the redemption which he was about to effect should thereby, on the outset, receive such a shock that it might for ever be frustrated.

The second object of the prince of darkness was, as by the dextrous thrust of an experienced fencer, to push the Saviour from his mediatorial path, and establish his own dominion over mankind for ever.

To effect these purposes, he assumed the character of a well-wisher and friend. He professed that he desired nothing so much as that the work of redemption should be accomplished, and would only show a shorter way to its attainment, and he formed all his projects with as much skill as we might expect to find in one who fell from the greatest height of wisdom and knowledge to the lowest abyss of wickedness.

VI.

THE APTITUDE OF THE TEMPTATIONS.

ARMED with extreme craft and subtlety, the tempter drew near to Jesus. He hoped that the fearful solitude in which our Lord had been, in the dry and barren wilderness, would facilitate his victory.

The fact that Jesus hungered, served to direct his first assault—so well does this murderer of souls know how to turn his weapons against us.

When we are solitary, and apart from the intercourse of men; when no human eye is upon us, no dear brother near to warn and awaken us, no partaker of the same salvation to strengthen our souls; when our thoughts roam freely abroad—then doth the wicked one put forth his strength, and bend his bow with might to speed the poisoned barb to our hearts: and when we hunger or thirst; when our mind is inwardly moving us towards earthly riches or honour, towards ease or enjoyment; then is he at hand, with friendly aspect and professions of devotedness: he respectfully submits one good counsel after another; he unfolds means without number of fulfilling

THE APTITUDE OF THE TEMPTATIONS.

our desires ; and however unhallowed these suggestions may be, he so well knows how to disguise and recommend them, and secure them a plausible sanction from holy Scripture, that we think surely an angel of God. has met us—yet it is none other but Satan himself in the form of an angel of light.

The unfathomable mystery of his iniquity has perhaps never manifested itself more fully than in the temptations with which he assaulted our Lord.

Can Christ then be tempted? Undoubtedly he can, for St. Paul says, He was, *in all points*, tempted like as we are. (Heb. iv. 15.) Luther translates it (*allenthalben*,) “on all sides.” The hand of that venerated man might well have trembled, when he was about to write down the expression “in all points.” With holy shame and sacred reverence he selected, in preference, the phrase “on all sides.”

Our Lord appeared “in the likeness of sinful flesh ;” (Rom. viii. 3.) that is, in the nature of man. All the consequences of sin came upon him, but not sin itself. He was tempted, yet without sin.

The sinless propensities and weaknesses of our nature were also the portion of Christ. He hungered and thirsted ; he was sensible of fatigue, of rest and refreshment, of joy, and of sorrow.

Of these sinless infirmities, therefore, Satan purposed to make use, in attempting to withdraw the Saviour from the path divinely marked out for him. He presented before him unlawful means of satisfying the desires of nature.

Had the Redeemer yielded even in thought to the base insinuations of the wicked one, then would success have crowned the turpitude and villany of Satan.

The Lamb would not have been without spot or blemish, the Priest would not have been undefiled, the sacrifice would have been unavailing, the whole plan of salvation for ever marred, and the entire race of man would have been irrecoverably lost.

How much, then, depended upon that single event which took place in the wilderness !

How immensely important, how intimately connected with our highest destiny, was the temptation of Jesus. Ought we not, therefore, with all the intensity of which our souls are capable, to watch the development and the issue of this wondrous scene !

VII.

THE FIRST TEMPTATION.

THE tempter awaited a favourable opportunity for his first attack. It was when Jesus hungered that he came to him, and said, "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." (ver. 3.) This was the first assault by which Satan endeavoured partly to arrive at a certainty respecting the person of Jesus; partly, in the event of his really proving to be the Lord from heaven, to bring to nought the great work of the atonement.

He applied himself, in the first place, to defile the immaculate soul of the Redeemer, by infusing into it the sin of *distrust*.

As he opened his attack upon our first parents, by deceiving them with respect to the divine command, (Gen. iii. 1.) so also here, "If thou be the Son of God," was nothing else, in reality, than a covert suggestion of the doubt, "Yea, hath God said," a temptation to lead him to question the testimony which, at his baptism, he had received from heaven.

And mark the monstrous and unexampled craftiness of the tempter. In these few words, "If thou be the

Son of God, command that these stones be made bread," under one temptation he concealed numberless snares.

Jesus shall either, as the wicked one supposed, if he be the Son of God, be brought into perplexity respecting his Sonship and the divine testimony—(Matt. iii. 17.) It will appear to him improbable that God should suffer his Son to perish with hunger amidst the stones and barren thorns of the desert, and then his soul will be defiled with unbelief; or he will lay aside the veil, and, by a miracle, give proof, at once, of his Godhead, and then he will act in opposition to the counsels of heaven, which have assigned him poverty and suffering, and the hiding of his glory, that he may make atonement for Adam's guilt. (Isa. liii.)

But should this not take place, thought the tempter; should I fail in my endeavour to induce him to leave the path of humility and lowliness, and to make manifest to myself and others the dignity of his nature, yet his extreme sufferings from hunger will, perhaps, impel him to adopt my suggestion. It will seem to him allowable to save himself from starvation, through the power which God has given him. He will make the stones bread, by an act of his own, to satisfy his hunger, and thus put away from himself the cup of bitterness, without the drinking of which to the dregs a propitiation for sin cannot be made. (Rom. iii. 25.)

These were the thoughts of the prince of darkness. He hoped that if Jesus should haply escape one snare, yet he would be entangled in a second, or a third. And, indeed, no more subtle or skilful plan could have been imagined.

Without a miracle put forth in his behalf, the most holy of the children of men would, in such circumstances, have fallen.

Had there been the smallest vein of sin in Christ, it would have been apparent. But no; not one atom soils the purity of his holiness.

He stands alone in the field; no guards protect him. Yet, behold, HE TRIUMPHS—Satan is defeated.

The temptation to make stones into bread is one of frequent occurrence. Something of it has been experienced by all the children of God.

There are brethren among us, (I speak of brethren in the Lord,) to whom a fast also has at the same time been appointed. They have no work nor wages, and yet have need of daily bread.

Brethren, you sit down in the wilderness, amidst stones and thorns, and you are an hungered. It would, indeed, be surprising if the tempter did not present such an idea as this:—"Can you really be children of God, when He leaves you to starve?" and then add, "Command that these stones be made bread." It would be a wonder if he did not furnish you with all sorts of counsels, such as "Be mean and flatter, and you shall find favour and gain employment;" or, "deceive and lie, that you may procure wealth;" or, "steal, and save yourselves from famine;" or, "unite yourselves with the enemies of the cross, and they will provide for you;" or, "have recourse to gambling," or whatever it may be.

This is, in fact, "Command that these stones be made bread."

But, my brethren, let the stones remain stones, and expect your bread from Him who has not only promised

to provide it, but also to do for you greater things than this.

Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

Is it not much better to hunger and fast in the name of God, than to possess abundance in the name of the devil?

Your fast-days will cease when they shall have worked out that for which, in the purpose of God, they were designed.

Be not dismayed, you are walking in the wilderness, in order that you may see the truth and glory of the Lord, which are beheld better in the dry and thirsty land than in the rich and fertile fields.

There are some among us *who derive from their profession of religion ignominy and shame*, and know but little joy and comfort. It would be strange if Satan did not present himself, and endeavour to persuade you to suspect the whole of your religion, or to seek that joy which you cannot find in God, in the world, and the things thereof.

My brethren, it is the devil who gives you such counsel, and who would move you in a manner inconsistent with the religion of Jesus, to change into bread the stones of your suffering and sorrow.

We should, I think, prefer, if needs be, to pass the time of our sojourning here in the wilderness with Jesus, to suffer with him, and then participate in his glory; and should cheerfully leave those poisoned viands which the devil delights to prepare for us, to those who shall burn and howl for ever with the prince of darkness in the lake of fire.

“The Lord rebuke thee,” be our cry, whenever we perceive this serpent crawling near our feet.

Thanks be to God, ever since the true Michael contended with Satan, and cast him to the ground, his power over us has been destroyed. (Jude 9; Col. ii. 15.)

In his buffeting he may attack us with hand and foot, so that we may totter and fall, but we shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth us with his hand. (Psalm xxxvii. 24.)

Should the roaring lion prowl around our tents, seeking whom he may devour; (1 Pet. v. 8.) the Prince of Peace, the Captain of our Salvation, holds him by the power of his might, and assigns him the limits beyond which he cannot pass.

Let us hide ourselves only in the wounds of Christ. (Exod. xxxiii. 22.) In this strong tower we are safe, and may well rejoice. (Prov. xviii. 10.)

VIII.

THE WEAPONS AND THE VICTORY OF CHRIST.

THE weapons with which our Lord achieved the victory, were the Word of God—"It is written"—and Satan was overcome, his purpose was frustrated.

The Bible is the arsenal of the heroes of God, the spiritual armoury, whose walls are thickly studded with shields and coats of mail, and rich with swords and glittering spears. Whoever has triumphed in the spiritual conflict, equipped himself here. Hence were taken the sling-stones, which felled the Goliaths to the ground.

He that has access to this spiritual armoury is powerful in the camp.

Of these weapons Satan is afraid, and it has been his unremitting endeavour, either to despoil or conceal the word of God, or to destroy its effects.

To what expedients has not this cunning sophist resorted; what has he not brought forward and industriously circulated, to throw suspicion on the word or render it ambiguous, and thus to rob men of the pure unadulterated Scriptures of truth!

What false assertions has he not made under the high-sounding title of exposition, to impugn the

authenticity and genuineness of the Bible! There is not a single book in the Scriptures, the authority of which this malicious fiend has not attempted to shake, not a miracle which he has not stamped as a fable, not a promise which he has not endeavoured to weaken and nullify.

And he is still always employed, either through his instruments and servants, false prophets, professors, and others; or in his own person, by his immediate influence—ever is he doing his utmost to bring into question the purity of the word of God; for this word is his stumbling-block. But spurn him with abhorrence, turn your back upon him whenever he opens his accursed mouth, for he is a murderer of souls, and has been so from the beginning, a liar, and the father of lies. (John viii. 44.)

But *in what way, you ask, can the word of God afford such important service in the hour of temptation?* I will inform you.

Whenever the devil would lead us astray, his first and chief concern is to confuse our ideas. That which is perverted he sets before us as right, that which is human as divine, and evil he calls good, and good evil. Truth he represents as falsehood, and falsehood as truth. And when he has so deceived and dazzled us, we become subservient to his will, perhaps, when we think that we are doing what is right.

But these villanous spells and deceptions can profit him little, when we rest in faith on the word of God, which then secures us from deception and misapprehension. For it declares to us most distinctly what is right and wrong, true and false; what, under

all circumstances we should do, or think, or say, in accordance with the will of God. Examples will illustrate my meaning.

Satan would mar the labour of a preacher of the Gospel, and weaken its effect. He sets about his design with subtlety. He suggests to him that he should preach a little more smoothly, that he should not make the way so narrow, nor the gate so strait—and thus he may gain the friendship of the whole congregation. Yes, and many whom he has now only made refractory, he may then easily win to the truth.

When once this pleasing commencement has been made, the wicked one knows well how to back his counsels.

Does the preacher now take this matter into consideration, and has he no other shield than his own good thoughts, then is he soon ensnared. The propositions of the devil appear most reasonable and good, for Satan is wiser than he.

But let him rest by faith on the word of God, and believably reply, “It is written,” ‘Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life.’ (Matt. vii. 14.) “It is written,” ‘Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.’ (Gal. i. 8.) What can the devil do now? This confidence in the word of God, this faith, is to him as the fire of artillery, which he cannot sustain—it compels him to retreat.

Take another example. *Satan would have you believe, that the religion of Jesus is not the only way of salvation.* And how does he go to work? With consummate skill. He carries you in spirit to a high

place, and shows you the millions of souls who, both in the Christian and heathen world, live without Christ; and thus he begins his discourse: "Tell me, shall *all these* be lost? To such a supposition neither your reason nor your heart will assent. But they do not believe in Christ, at least, as you and persons of your stamp believe in him. Can Christ then really be the *only* way of salvation? Can that which you call the new birth, be necessary, without any limitation, for the salvation of mankind? Have you not then been accustomed to entertain too contracted, too confined views respecting salvation?"

Thus doth he speak. Are you, with your reason, alone upon the battle-field, you cannot escape from this snare. His illusions will prove successful, he will assuredly triumph over you; the ground on which you stand will easily be made to rock beneath your feet.

But if you can wield the weapons of heavenly temper, if you can boldly oppose to the evil one the word of God, and in faith say to him, "It is written," 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' (John iii. 3.)—"It is written," 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life, no man cometh unto the Father, but by me'—"It is written," 'few there be that find this way,' (Matt. vii. 14.) 'few are chosen.' (Matt. xx. 16.)—If you can believingly hold fast by these divine declarations, then is the devil stricken to the ground, his net is broken; he will desist from his endeavour to persuade you that Christ is not the only ground of salvation. His remaining hope then, is to

throw suspicion upon the word itself, on which you rely.

Again, *Satan would draw you back to the world.* And what is his method of proceeding? He gently approaches you, and insinuates that it is not right to seclude yourself from the world, and apparently desire to shun so completely the society of others, it does not well accord with the brotherly love which should obtain among Christians. You must sometimes repair to worldly circles, to let your light shine there, and men will see that the religion of Christ by no means converts its possessors into morose monks and hermits, but makes them cheerful, that they may thus win men to Christ. Yes, and for your own sake also, to exercise and confirm yourself in holiness, you must not withdraw altogether from the world, for to be holy where there are no solicitations to sin is an easy matter; but to walk in the sight of the wicked, and to refuse compliance with their evil courses, this is indeed to be righteous.

So doth the subtle one reason, and it pleaseth the old man well. (Eph. iv. 22 ; Col. iii. 9.)

Do you venture to dispute with him, you are not his equal; he will soon bring you under, and gain the field. For no doctor or professor is more skilled in disputation than he. He can make the most absurd things appear to be plausible and excellent.

But should you be able, meet him in faith with the word of God; should you, for instance, in such a case, say, "It is written," "Love not the world." (1 John ii. 15.) then can he do no more. You have cut off the hands of Dagon. (1 Sam. v. 4.)

Thus is the word of God, when grasped and wielded in faith, the all-powerful sword of the Spirit, by which we may subdue the wicked one. (Eph. vi. 17.)

“Yes, the ten commandments” says one, “if written in our heart, and we give utterance to them against him, will speedily repel him.” They are like the clubs of Sampson, tenfold, or ten swords of Michael against the roaring lion.

How then did the Lord obtain the victory? Satan counselled him to command that the stones should be made bread, and that thus, by an act of his own power, he might appease his hunger. This was a cunning and ensnaring device, as he well knew.

There were (to speak after the manner of men) many things which tended to move the Lord Jesus to consent to this advice, and in that case, as we have remarked, the work of redemption would at once have been destroyed. But he hearkened not to the suggestion. He left the stones to remain stones, and continued to hunger.

What did Jesus make use of in delivering himself from the snares which were laid for him? It was the word of God. On that word his eye rested. It is written, in the eighth chapter of Deuteronomy, and the third verse, “Man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live.” This he grasped in faith, and opposed to the tempter. And in this promise he found abundant ground of confidence.

Better to suffer hunger forty days and nights more, and even longer, than by a distrustful act of power of his own to forestall the aid of the Father. God can

sustain me without bread, he has led me into the wilderness, I hope in him. This was his thought—in truth, an impenetrable breast-plate.

The devil was now obliged to devise other projects. The hope he had entertained to persuade Jesus to an act of compliance, that he might avoid the sufferings connected with the atonement for the transgression of Adam, had now at once and for ever vanished. For Jesus believed the declaration of the word, that God could, even in the bitterest season of want, without bread feed him, and without water give him drink, and, through the bare word of his mouth, could support and maintain him. Against this faith must all the darts of the devil be shivered, as against an iron bulwark.

The words with which Jesus prevailed are written, as it has been said, in the book of Deuteronomy, Moses spake them to the children of Israel, on the borders of the pleasant land, when he recalled to their minds the faithfulness and truth with which God had led them for forty years through the wilderness. “And thou shalt remember,” he said, “all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments or no. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know, that he might make thee know, that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord, doth man live.” (viii. 23.)

Yes, the Lord needs not the mill or the oven for the

supply of his children ; he can rain upon them bread from heaven, as he did in the wilderness. He can give it them in the night, when the little ones are at rest.

He did so at Cherith, (1 Kings xvii. 5.) he did so at Zarephath, (1 Kings xvii. 9.) by means of a widow-woman, and in many other places. It is a small thing to him.

It is not the bread we eat, for the support of our bodies, that is essential to our life, but it is that spiritual food which his word, his will, and his blessing, supply through the outward means. It is only when God wills that bread can nourish us ; otherwise it is of no benefit, we are poor and weak in the midst of abundance.

Since, therefore, the quality of sustaining life does not belong to the bread, but depends on the will of God alone, we can easily understand how, with five loaves and two fishes, JESUS could feed and satisfy five thousand men ; (Matt. xiv. 17—21.) and, with a cake of barley bread, could give his servant strength for forty days and forty nights ; (1 Kings. xix. 8.) yea, how he supports so many poor families.

The Lord needs not any bread to sustain us when it pleases him. His word only is enough, and we live. Without bread did Moses subsist on Sinai, and Jesus in the wilderness, and so have many, many others.

It needs but his word, and the air which we breathe is changed into milk, and wine, and we eat the richest fare, and drink only strength and refreshment, without opening the lips—without sitting at table, or moving the hand. This is meant by the expression—

“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”

In times of persecution thousands of the children of God have experienced this, in its literal sense; the believing poor continually do so, and it is true—as true as that the living God dwelleth in heaven.

Let all of us, therefore, who suffer need, lay hold of this truth, that it may preserve us from fear and discouragement, and that it may protect us against the assaults of the wicked one.

It has pleased God, in his providence, to reduce many among us to great necessity. They have begun to suffer want in every thing—in labour and its recompense, and perhaps also in prospect and credit. They are deep in the wilderness among the stoues, and there is sighing among them by night and by day. Steal and defraud they will not; God will graciously preserve them from such crimes.

But Satan would obtain much advantage, if the thought only gained place in your breasts—“God has forsaken us; now must we see, how we can provide for ourselves?” Satan would be well pleased if you only yielded to the distrustful care and anxiety—“What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed?” or if you adopted the notion that God has given you a sign, by the necessity which presses upon you, that you may endeavour to free yourselves from distress, by having recourse to some venturous speculation, or by the chances of play, or by some artifice, or any other improper means. Yes, then would the tempter have already succeeded well.

Brethren, though much embarrassed, permit not to the adversary such a triumph. Meet him with the weapons which your Master bore against him, and which thus, as by special consecration, have acquired holiness and strength ; and say in faith, "It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

This is the word of him that is faithful and true. Hold fast this word, build thereon, and wait—wait only a little in the wilderness. He will never leave you nor forsake you. (Jos. i. 5 ; Heb. xiii. 5.)

There are some, I could mention them by name, who have been in greater straits than you. They have believed that word with unshaken confidence. Whenever the wicked one has harassed them with his cursed counsels, they have, in this faith, with resolution and firmness, repelled him, and trusted in the Lord. Now is their mouth filled with laughter, and their tongue with singing. The Lord hath done great things for them, whereof they are glad. (Ps. cxxvi. 2, 3.) They would not exchange for mountains of gold and silver the experience which they then acquired in the wilderness. They have seen the glory of the Lord, and have themselves become living witnesses that "man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

"If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." So said the tempter. He required that Jesus should give proof of his Sonship. But our Lord chose rather to leave this demonstration to the Father.

O, my brethren, may it in every case be the same

with you. God will make it manifest that you are his children, not, perhaps, by causing you to live in houses of affluence, but by enabling you with confidence and joy to sing praises among the stones and juniper-trees in the wilderness, and supporting you by the word which proceedeth out of his mouth.

IX.

THE SECOND TEMPTATION.

THE first temptation of our Lord was a total failure. Whether Jesus were the Son-of God, Satan could not yet decide; and if he were so, the tempter had not succeeded in moving him a finger-breadth from his mediatorial path.

The devil makes preparation for a second assault. "He taketh him up into the holy city, and sitteth him on a pinnacle of the temple." Perhaps only in vision? No, corporeally, as the scriptural account compels us to believe.

Our Lord was borne through the air in a moment, by supernatural power, and conveyed to the holy city, and then hurried with the swiftness of lightning upwards to the flat roof of one of the projecting wings of the temple, on the declivity of the mountain. The same power with which "the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip" from the desert of Gaza, was here granted to the evil spirit for the occasion. (Acts viii. 39.)

As an eagle with his prey, so fled the prince of darkness with the Lord of Glory. This was awfully terrible; but Jesus was willing to endure the most horrible, and encounter the most fearful things, that he might drink for us, to the dregs, the cup of trembling, and

leave nothing of our ransom unpaid, even to the uttermost farthing.

He was willing to be the sport of the evil spirit in his accursed hands, that the angels of God might bear us sinners in the arms of tenderness to Abraham's bosom.

Did our Lord know that it was the angel of darkness with whom he had to do? I think not. It appears to have been hidden from him by the sacred counsel of God, that the temptation might be the more severe, and the victory the greater and more glorious.

Behold our Saviour now, upon the pinnacle of the temple, with Satan at his side. A giddy abyss is beneath their feet. Deep under them lies the city; yet deeper in the valley, as a little streak, flows with rapid course the brook of Kidron.

Satan assumes the mien and aspect of the best intentioned friend, who, if Jesus were indeed the Son of God, had with him one and the same purpose, and desired nothing so earnestly as that the work of redemption should be speedily accomplished.

He points down to the fearful abyss, and says unto Jesus, "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down." Perhaps he added still more, "Behold, I earnestly desire to know whether thou art the Son of God; I await only for the certainty, to bow my knee immediately, and pay my homage. I am not the only one who, with intense eagerness, awaits the unveiling of thy person and glory. Thou shalt be a king and ruler over a great people as soon as it shall please thee to unfold thy kingly majesty and power. See, here is an opportunity, cast thyself down from this eminence. This miracle will astonish the world;

no more doubt will then be entertained as to thy God-head, and every knee shall be bent in the dust. Thou shalt be as God. And not others only will be convinced, but thyself also wilt arrive at perfect certainty that thou art the Messiah, and that God has not forsaken thee, as he appears to have done since the commencement of thy suffering from hunger in the wilderness."

Something of this kind might the devil represent to him; and with the more certainty, to attain his purpose, he quotes that blessed promise in the ninety-first Psalm, "He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone."

The plan is well conceived, and the trial severe. Yes, the seducer appears to be an angel of light, and his counsel good, and well suited for the purpose.

Behold, then, our Lord upon the fearful summit of the temple. How will he act? One step forwards and he treads the air—the angels bear him gently to the ground; the people cry aloud, "Hosannah!" he is the object of their wonder, astonishment, and worship—but shipwreck is made of the work of our redemption for ever; for the Priest has then forsaken the path of poverty and abstinence—the Mediator has acted in opposition to the plan and counsel of God—the Lamb is not without blemish—it is polluted with sin, it is unfit to be presented as the offering of atonement.

O moment big with the destiny of a world! Yet, thanks be to God, Jesus detected the deep artifice. He well knew, indeed, that the angels would bear him up. But should he, therefore, call in question the

faithfulness and power of God? No, no; never. His holy soul shrunk back from the snare which Satan had laid for him.

One word of the Bible suffices to discomfit the wicked one. A second brings him to a stand, to shield and spear—"It is written again, thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." The command is uttered. The Lord hath said it; and the devil is again smitten to the ground.

X.

SPIRITUAL HEIGHTS.

THE holy city, the spiritual Jerusalem, is ever the scene of Satan's subtlety and most cunning assaults. It is also the field of his most splendid conquests. O, may it soon be otherwise !

Temptations are always at hand, and men are even now, through the devices of Satan, placed in circumstances, as to spiritual things, which greatly resemble the trial of our Lord on the pinnacle of the temple. These are spiritual heights.

The best and most happy condition upon earth is unquestionably this, to abide, 'as a worm,' at the feet of Jesus, poor in spirit ; with Lazarus to lie at the rich man's door ; and with the woman of Canaan to desire, as a dog, only the crumbs that fall from the Master's table.

And it is well to be thus, for then shall we become rich. Here alone are we secure. No wonder then that the wicked one is intent on nothing more eagerly than to entice the children of God from this state of humility and spiritual poverty. And many are the devices to which he has recourse to effect his

purpose. Let me place before you one or two of them.

Clothed as an angel of light, he comes to you, and carries you into the holy city, that is, *he sets before your spiritual vision all the gifts, and graces, and privileges*, of which you may become partakers in the kingdom of heaven, so that you imagine it is a holy angel who enables you to see these glorious sights.

And now the enemy brings forward one of these gifts; for example, *that of the Holy Ghost*, and begins to explain to you all that you may gain by this gift; how the Holy Ghost will sanctify (Rom. xv. 16.) and enlighten you; (John xvi. 14.) how he will guide you into all truth; (John xvi. 13.) reveal unto you the deep things of God; (1 John ii. 27.) will lead and move you; (Rom. viii. 14.) will speak and witness within you; (1 John v. 6.) and so on, in accordance with that which is written.

But the devil proceeds farther, and seeks to persuade you that the Spirit will reveal new things unto you, which the Bible only incidentally or partially contains, or perhaps not at all. He goes farther, and teaches you to regard your own thoughts as those which are suggested by the Spirit; and yet still farther, and declares that you are inspired, one who has no more need for the outer light from the letter, since you have such inward illumination; and, alas! before you are aware, you are transported to the pinnacle of the temple.

You feel yourself exalted on high, above the word and the testimony of God, above the church and ministry of the gospel; you behold all these things, together with the whole of Jerusalem, all other believers lying deep at your feet; and if you are not seized with

dizziness on this painful elevation, and finish your course in the horrible abyss of madness, it is to the unbounded grace of God alone that you are beholden for your preservation.

And such wiles as these have before now succeeded in ensnaring the souls of some, who would no longer conform to any prescribed order, or permit themselves to be ruled by the word of God, conceiving that they were led by the Spirit, which had testified to them of higher and better things. Truly, there may have been those among them, who were in reality pious men, and who would again be recovered to the right path, but still it is a melancholy and distressing misconception. May God preserve us from such illusions.

But to proceed, “It is written”—“Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.” (Gal. i. 8, 9.) “It is written”—“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” (Psalm cxix. 105.) Such an appeal to the word of God puts to flight the wicked one.

If Satan gains not his point in one way, he tries another, and he does not desist till he has had recourse to all his expedients.

We see many standing on the pinnacle of the temple, and various are the means by which they have been transported thither.

One indulges the pleasing fancy, that he understands all mysteries, that he is gifted with a spiritual illumination beyond others, that he carries about him the keys of

David. The devil has made a prey of him through the abundance of *his knowledge*, and with wicked enchantment has persuaded him to believe that he hath the anointing and knoweth all things. (1 John ii. 27.)

Another regards himself as the man who, with the sword of his mouth, shall slay the wicked, who, with the sceptre of his word, shall sway the minds of men, and after whom no one dares to speak. His ability in teaching and preaching has become, by the subtlety of the wicked one, a trap and a snare.

A third arrogates to himself the proud pre-eminence of being, with reference to God, far apart from others, as if he sat on a seat in the kingdom of Christ twice as high as other poor sinners. Perhaps it was the gift of prayer he possessed, from which the enemy prepared him the sweet poison.

In a fourth the notion has firmly fixed itself, that without him the kingdom of God cannot stand. He is a pillar without his equal on earth; an apostle, an Elijah of his day. The blessing which God granted to his word and testimony, has been made, through the artifice of the devil, into a lime-twigg, on which he has been caught.

The dreams and chimeras of a fifth has Satan magnified into *pure visions and manifestations from heaven*. Now the poor creature deems himself a seer and a prophet.

Before the eyes of a sixth the devil holds his magic mirror, in which the weak mortal *sees himself with a halo of glory round his head*; or the deceiver sends to him friends, who represent that his meekness and patience, his faith or his love, must be extolled and admired, and even idolized by men; and then the poor

deluded soul enters into the full persuasion that God most certainly intends to set him forth as an example of holiness.

Behold, these are the heights, the pinnacles of the temple, to which Satan conducts men.

And the evil does not stop here ; for let the deceived souls but once stand upon these heights, and imagine themselves apostles, saints, and prophets, then they sometimes step higher. It is not all of them who come down again without having first sustained injury. Alas ! some fall from these heights down into the depths of mental aberration.

Of such unhappy ones, who at length have supposed themselves to be God, or Christ, or the Holy Ghost, every age has afforded instances, and that even in the midst of the holy city.

Brethren, abide in your strong tower, and lie in the dust ; above all, those of you who are rich in gifts, and apt to teach ; those who are held in reputation among the brethren, and who publicly instruct in the congregation ; those of you who lead the assembly of the pious, and whose light shines with especial splendour in Zion. Such things readily present to the dragon that which he can seize, and by which he can rapidly transport you to the heights.

Gird as a breast-plate on your bosom the words of Christ, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. v. 3.)

Place as a helmet on your head that truth, "Whoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." (Mark x. 15.)

Take as a sword in your hand that word, "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the lowly." (James iv. 6.)

And never forget that the golden rose of Jesus does not bloom upon the heights, but in the deep vallies.

And should the devil urge you into a presumptuous and perplexing speculation with regard to the unsearchable mysteries of God, should he hurry you into vain and profitless investigations, respecting the Trinity, or eternity, or the two natures of Christ, or whatever else it may be of this description ; now collect all your powers, and cry aloud to him, " It is written," ' We know in part, and we prophecy in part ; but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.' (1 Cor. xiii. 9, 10.) Declare to him, in the name of Jesus, that you desire to know nothing more than that which is necessary for your salvation, and thus you will drive him away.

XI.

“ IF THOU BE THE SON OF GOD, CAST THYSELF DOWN.”

THAT the devil eagerly makes use of our relation to God, to move us the more readily to all kinds of wicked compliances, is an acknowledged truth.

Has Satan learned, for instance, that *you have yet a sin that is dear to you, and which has not been renounced and overcome*; he brings you into circumstances which not only supply incentives to that sin, but also the opportunity of indulging it. Then you stand on the brink of a precipice. “Cast thyself down,” whispers the devil, “thou shalt escape.” You hesitate. He adds, “it is so pleasant below.” You are still reluctant. “Cast thyself down,” he cries yet louder. You tremble at the danger, and yet cannot withdraw from the spot, and are as one enchanted. “Cast thyself down,” proceeds the wicked one: “thou art a child of God; thou canst again find grace.” He so speaks, and if God do not hold you back, the leap is taken.

You are by nature of an irascible disposition. Some one in your household disturbs you. You are greatly stirred up to yield to anger and revenge, but you know

not whether you dare. You are on the edge of a pit. “Cast thyself down,” cries the devil, “Thou art a child of God, and between the children of God and the world there should be no peace, but a sword and division. (Matt. x. 34.) Give scope to thy passions.” Thus he counsels, and before he has spoken, you are boiling, perhaps, with wrath, and heaping sin upon sin.

You are in great straits, and are weary of life. The devil sets you upon the top of your house, or upon the edge of a cliff, or on the shore of the deep sea. O, how dreadful is your position! “Cast thyself down,” whispers the evil one. You are inclined to do so, yet you shrink from such a plunge. “Why dost thou linger?” cries the tempter. “‘Cast thyself down.’ In the arms of death there is sweet repose, and all suffering will cease. ‘Cast thyself down.’ Thou standest by grace, and grace never is lost, even though the mountains should depart and the hills be removed. (Isa. liv. 10.) ‘Cast thyself down.’ Hasten to thy home.” Thus the serpent.—O frightful! you waver—you cast your eyes downward: the desire is great, the impulse strong, the means before you; and O! if the hand of divine mercy do not interpose to save you, you rush into eternity.

Satan tempted the Lord Jesus, that he might, in a way not approved of God, namely, by a voluntary leap from the pinnacle of the temple, give evidence that he was the Son of God. And thus also does he draw near to believers.

Doubts are entertained as to your state of grace. He whispers to you, “Men hesitate to reckon you one of the children of the kingdom. Prove to them what you

are." Now it is high time to wield the sword of the Spirit against the tempter, to meet him with the word, "The Lord knoweth them that are his;" (2 Tim. ii. 19.) and to let that suffice.

But in such circumstances some fall into grievous errors.

One is guilty of *shameful falsehood*, inasmuch as he boasts of spiritual experiences which he has not really attained.

Another yields to *criminal impulses*, since he speaks of frames of mind, in his own case, which God alone can produce, and which he does not possess.

This man acts with *scandalous dissimulation*, whilst he hypocritically arrogates to himself the anointing which has not yet been granted him, even for a moment.

That man is stained with *black impurity*, because he endeavours to make men believe that the works which he has done by his own act have been wrought in him by the Spirit of God.

And what abominations can be greater in the eyes of God than these?

Well may the devil insultingly laugh, when he succeeds in casting the children of God into such a sink as this.

"Cast thyself down," said Satan, and would add *the reason*, viz. that thereby he might carry forward the purposes and the counsel of God. And earnestly did he desire to excite in the mind of Jesus any degree of impatience as to the slow progress of his work of redemption.

And O! *how gladly would he stir up in believers the motions of impatience*; how eagerly does he spur them on to self-imposed exercises, in order to perfect their holiness, and urge them to endeavour, by rapid strides, to mount to the highest step of the ladder in the attainment of their individual glory. With what importunity does he call to them to “leap down and choose the shortest way;” for the base deceiver is well aware that such a hurrying forwards is only a falling back, since it is a turning away from the throne of grace and the blood of the Lamb, and he knows that in such ways, of our own choosing, no angels will bear us in their hands, but that we shall only dash our feet against the stones, and that we shall fall into darkness, pride, and self-sufficiency.

Are they witnesses and ministers of the word whom he thus deceives? O, how doth he rejoice *when they think the time long till God shall crown their labours*, and how sedulously doth he cherish this impatience in their souls, and with what delight doth he cry, “Cast thyself down from the pinnacle of the temple.” And with what exultation doth he look on when they obey his voice, and endeavour, with their own wild-fire, to kindle the desires of the congregation, and with fleshly tumult to excite the people, so to speak, to take the kingdom of heaven by storm, and whilst God doth it not, to gird themselves, to anoint and equip themselves for the war.

This is a day of rejoicing to the devil, for he knows that now at least he has succeeded, and that under such dark and earthly impulses the Holy Ghost will not make himself known.

Those by whom the Lord will execute his purposes of mercy are broken instruments, and are submissive to the will of their God, and are cheerfully led and directed by the Saviour. And this is as it should be. Violence and precipitation can effect nothing in this great work.

XII.

SATAN ARMED WITH THE WORD OF GOD.

“ IF thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down.”
So spake the devil to Jesus—a most difficult task.

But the children of God have dared to attempt deeds of greater peril. Peter ventured, notwithstanding its rage, to walk upon the stormy sea; (Matt. xiv. 29.) and the three children recorded in Daniel, encountered the burning fiery furnace; and they suffered no injury. (Dan. iii. 27.)

In all things is it given in command to the angels of God, to bear us up in their hands. They are attached to us, as a body-guard and safe-conduct, on whose guidance and protection, in all the way in which God has commanded us to go, it is our privilege joyfully to reckon.

Relying on that promise, Jesus might have cast himself from the pinnacle of the temple; but he did it not. And why? Because God had not expressly directed him. Scarcely was the satanic suggestion made, when probably the divine promise presented itself to the soul of Jesus. “ No, thought the pure Lamb, for such self-chosen way is the promise not given,” and if Satan said,

“The Lord will give his angels charge concerning thee,” our Lord repelled him with weapons taken out of the heavenly armoury of the word; “Jesus said unto him, it is written, thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God;” and again was Satan vanquished.

But what is meant by tempting God? It is that which we have described, namely, *voluntarily to go into danger, that God may deliver us.*

To such unworthy courses would the devil endeavour to lead us, and for this purpose he has committed to memory the most striking promises of God, that he may take us by surprise. Therefore, when some word of God is presented to us, to induce us to take some daring step, let us ask, whether this word is suited to our case, and whether we also have a warrant to rest upon it in such circumstances. Thus it will become clear, who has presented to us the word, and Satan will not so easily seduce us.

If a man comes to you, and says, “Steer out into those furious breakers, and rescue a brother out of the surge, for it is written, ‘When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee.’” (Isa. xliii. 2.) If he says to you, “Go into that house on fire, and snatch that screaming child out of the flames, for God has said, ‘When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.’” (Isa. xliii. 2.) Do you hear a voice within you, saying, “Give to that poor hungry soul your last penny, for it is written, ‘Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.’” (Matt. xxv. 40.) Then, my friend,

gird yourself in the name of God, and do so. A good angel speaks to you, and you may reasonably expect all help.

But should another approach you, and say, "Come, friend, into this or that gay society, for it is written, 'He will keep the feet of his saints.'" (1 Sam. ii. 9.) Is it said to you, "only go—venture it once—take delight in it, without any care as to the consequences, for it is written, 'he giveth to his beloved sleeping.'" (Ps. cxxvii. 2. German version.) Then know that it is a crafty devil, with whom you have to do; and answer him, "It is written, again, 'thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.'"

There are many snares of the devil, such as these, taken from the word of God. To this class belongs that accursed temptation, by which *he entices us to make trial of this or that divine declaration, whether it holds good*, and thus to bring under examination, as it were, the faithfulness and truth of the Lord.

So once, for example, did a villanous device of his succeed with three ministers of the word. He placed before their eyes, the eighteenth chapter of Matthew and twentieth verse, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them;" and then, that other passage in the preceding verse, "Again, I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven;" and then he asked, "Is it indeed so?" "Ah," thought the preachers, "we will put it to the test;" and they appointed an hour for the purpose of praying that the Lord would personally appear. And they

came together and prayed, "O Lord, manifest thyself, Lord appear among us;" but he did not appear, and the devil cried out "victory!" His malicious design succeeded. Afterwards the Lord did indeed appear to them, but in a very different manner from that which they had expected. He became unto them as a moth, and as a worm, (see Hos. v. 12. marginal reading,) and to the end of their lives they received no more light, nor joy, nor peace, and a spiritual decline took place, which they could not avert.

May God in mercy preserve us from such attempts to prove his faithfulness and truth!

Let the least inclination of the kind, that moves within us, be a token, that we are in an evil case, and let us cry as loud and earnestly as we can, "It is written, thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

One of the common devices of Satan is, *to shake, if possible, our confidence in the word of God by means of the word itself.* Wonderful are the things which we live to behold!

He sets before us, at a glance, a multitude of unimportant things from the Bible. As that Paul wrote to Timothy, desiring him to bring the cloak, which he left at Troas, (2 Tim. iv. 13.) and many other circumstances equally trivial. And whilst he is holding them before our view, he asks us, with malicious purpose, "Are *these words* also inserted by the Spirit?" And then immediately afterwards, "Is not then *the whole* of the Bible inspired?" And he proceeds further, "What is from the Spirit, and what is not?" And then his conclusion—"The Bible is an unsafe foundation. And indeed occasionally, by such jugglers' artifices, he causes, for a moment at least, the whole

Bible-edifice to fall upon our heads, so that all is uncertain and wavering for a time, till at last we recover our recollection.

For the purpose of rendering suspected the word of God, he not unfrequently makes *a passage of Scripture stand prominently before our eyes, when something occurs in our life, which that word seems to falsify.*

Are you lying, for example, almost in despair, *in great need and bitter trial, and help is as yet afar off?* it is probably that word, which he recalls to your memory, “Like as a Father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him;” (Ps. ciii. 13.) and then with a fiendish grin, he asks, “Where then is the Father, where is his pity, and why tarries this boasted help?” And what would please the wicked one better, than to pollute your soul with distrust, impatience, and unbelief?

When *for a long time you have been entreating some mercy*, and wrestling with God, be it for bread for your hungry children, for counsel under some pressing embarrassment, or for some alleviation of your pain, or a little comfort in the cup of your anxiety, *and you do not receive it*—Satan is again near. “Behold,” says he, “is it not written,” ‘Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son?’ (John xiv. 13.) Now, pious worshipper, is your lap already full of the gifts of God?” So mocks the accursed one, and truly, if the Lord hold not his hand over your faith, you cannot escape these fiery darts unwounded.

The most dangerous method in which the devil uses the word of God as a weapon against us, is this—*He dissevers single passages of Scripture from their connec-*

tion, and instead of interpreting them according to the rule of faith, he presents them apart by themselves, perverts their meaning, and endeavours to show them to us in the same light. Here, certainly, if any where, it is important to encounter him with the weapons of the word, to enter with the sword of the Spirit into the conflict.

“It is written,” he says, “ ‘Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound;’ (Rom. v. 20.) therefore, let loose the reins, you have full liberty.” Say to him in reply, “It is written again, ‘Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid! How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?’” (Rom. vi. 1, 2.)

“But,” cries the devil, “It is written, ‘It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me;’ (Rom. vii. 17.) therefore, compose yourself, and be not so distressed about your faults.” Say to him in reply, “It is also written,” ‘O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?’ (Rom. vii. 24.) The children of God mourn over their sins.”

“It is written,” rejoins Satan, “ ‘that it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God, that sheweth mercy;’ (Rom. ix. 16.) therefore, remain in the world and in the enjoyment of pleasure, till God call you.” Let your answer be, “I know it, but ‘it is written again,’ ‘work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.’” (Phil. ii. 12.)

The devil is not backward with a rejoinder—“It is written,” ‘known unto God are all his works from the

beginning of the world,' (Acts xv. 18.) therefore, desist from your supplications and prayers, your portion is assigned you; whatever has been decreed to you, you shall certainly receive." Give him this reply, "It is written again, 'Ask and ye shall receive, for every one that asketh, receiveth.' " (Luke xi. 9, 10.)

"But," says the dragon, "It is written," 'this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.' (John vi. 39.) Live then as you like, and do whatsoever your heart desires. What have you to do with Moses and his laws? Your salvation is secured for eternity." Thus cry to him, in reply, "It is written again," 'My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.' " (John x. 27.)

Behold, my brother, thus shouldest thou disarm the devil, and in the strength of thy God triumph over him, and make a shew of him openly.

XIII.

THE MAGIC VISION.

THE scene of action is changed. With the rapidity of lightning was the Son of God hurried from the pinnacle of the temple, and borne by magic power to the summit of an exceeding high mountain. (ver. 8.) Then did he, in mental vision, behold himself placed, as it were, on the highest elevation of a lofty tower, and a boundless prospect, filled with every charm and dazzling beauty lay extended before his eyes in the mirror of a wondrous manifestation. And what followed ?

In a moment stand forth, within the circle of vision, in brilliant relief, all the kingdoms of the world, with all their glory, delights, and embellishments, in all their alluring forms. Time and space have no longer any limits. That which is distant draws nigh ; that which was closed opens itself wide ; that which was veiled is exposed to view ; and yet it was, as Luke says, (Luke iv. 5,) *in a moment of time*—an unheard of delusion of the senses !

In this splendid picture, as it is probable, lay the most lovely regions of the earth spread out before him, and around him the most charming prospect of mag-

nificent cities and gorgeous palaces—On this side haughty Rome, the victorious mistress of the world, and the ruler over a hundred kings; on the other side the spicy groves of the east, and the lovely rose-gardens of Persia—Here Ophir, with its rich mines of gold and of diamonds; there India, that land of wonders, abounding with the varied charms of an unfading spring, and flowing with milk and honey.

But not kingdoms merely and cities—yet other things presented themselves to the view of Jesus.

The devil showed him, besides the kingdoms of the world, also their glory.

Whatever this world possesses that is attractive and alluring, whatever delights the senses and commands admiration, and whatever the children of the world call their paradise and their heaven, at once did he behold spread before him—Here towering castles and pleasant villas, with their lawns and gardens; there chariots and horses, princely trains and equipages—On one spot, galleries of the fine arts and temples of wisdom; on another, monuments of fame and laurel-crowns of honour—Yonder, courtly society in golden chambers; nearer at hand the festive throng, amid the alluring tones and seductive power of symphony and song. In short, all that makes the heart leap within the children of this world, and suffuses the cheek, and causes the eyes to glisten with joy and delight, passed then before the view of Jesus—a picture that fixed and rivetted the attention; and no exhibition calculated to please and excite the feelings would Satan at that time conceal from his sight.

Something similar to this do we also at times experience. Those, namely, among our brethren who pos-

sess by nature a lively temperament, an easily excited mind, and a strong imagination, can no doubt speak of such magic visions. Such persons the devil is wont especially to approach with snares like these, since even their susceptible nature itself, and their quick sensibilities, appear to him already to promise a certain victory; at least, he the more easily succeeds in carrying persons of this description to the summit of his magic mountain.

For the purpose of effecting this, the tempter generally makes use of outward means. Such means he finds, for example, in the kingdom of the fine arts, in so far as they are made subservient to the world and to sin. At one time he makes use of an exquisite painting or beautiful poem; at another, of sweet and harmonious tones or moving melody, in the midst of which he carries on his enchantments.

So, for instance, is there often need only of some chord, or single tone of a flute, to be wafted in tender undulations from afar into the solitude of our quiet chamber, where it is scarcely audible, and his magic has already begun. As by the creating word of the Almighty, Satan produces in an instant before our view a paradise full of intoxicating joys, and the obstructing veil, as it were, being removed, the eye roams abroad through an earthly elysium.

The joys of our youth, of which we long had taken leave, present themselves before us in the most attractive form; and earthly pleasures which, perhaps, years ago we had crucified and slain, appear to us again in the most seductive shape and colouring. Here hang crowns of perishable honour, but how highly do we value them. There opens to our view the

tumultuous assembly of worldly society and frivolous intercourse ; but how many charms does this circle again present to us ? The poor soul finds itself powerfully drawn back.

Now open to our view the splendid halls of the great, filled with sound and song, with stringed instruments and the votaries of pleasure, reeling in the dance. And again, the eye rolls over the deceitful rose-beds of human art and sweet poetry.

In a word, all things that are beautiful and precious which the world can offer, high in dignity and attractive in grace, as by a stroke of enchantment, stand forth in living images and scenes in the mirror of our imagination ; and however vain in themselves, and worthless and pitiful, a magic spell is over them ; they are seen in beauteous colouring and adornment, and richest enamelling, as if we really looked into Paradise ; and an ocean of sensibility, and languishing, and desire begins in a moment, as we gaze at such a spectacle, to move and to heave within our souls, as if a storm were about to burst forth from their depths.

Behold ! it is at a moment like this that you are standing upon the high enchanted mountain, and the devil shows you all the kingdoms of the world and their glory *in a moment of time*.

And therefore it is, that the music of the present day, as it is now constituted, is so dangerous a thing, since the devil succeeds so easily in raising, by means of it, the most sinful of the passions.

In the operas and concerts of this world does Satan find a means of powerful enchantment, to make the vain glory of the world to outshine that of heaven.

Experienced Christians have acknowledged that, for

a moment at least, by means of such wicked and worldly music, they have been so irresistibly hurried along by the devil, as if under the influence of wine, that they have regretted their departure from Egypt, and have envied the children of this world, if not their scenes of rioting and intemperance, at least their higher and more refined pleasures.

Yes; not unfrequently is this most efficacious of all his artifices, one of the wings on which, by the power of the tempter, we are transported to the summit of that mountain whence the kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them, pass before the eyes of our fancy in a sea of light and golden vapour, and so charm and captivate the senses, that the very elect would be deceived and led aside, were it not that with his favour doth the Lord compass them as with a shield. (Psalm v. 12.)

XIV.

THE DARING PROPOSAL OF THE WICKED ONE.

AT the very moment when the kingdoms of this world and their glory lay before the eyes of Jesus, in the glare and dazzling splendour of this wondrous vision, did Satan, laying aside his deceptive guise, make known himself, and say, "All these things will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me." (Ver. 9.) St. Luke says, "All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them, for that is delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will, I give it. If thou, therefore, wilt worship me, all shall be thine." (Luke iv. 6, 7.) He claims all as his own—what daring presumption!

And yet, alas! here hath the Father of lies spoken the truth. Through the sentence of a holy God the world for which the great High Priest doth not pray, has been made the portion of Satan. (John xvii. 9.) He is their prince, (John xii. 31; xiv. 30; xvi. 11.) their ruler, (Eph. vi. 12.) their Lord. (Isai. xxvi. 13. 1 Cor. viii. 5.) The great nations of the earth are his, and the great bulk of mankind bear his yoke. The inhabitants of this world pay him tribute, and on the walls of their cities float his sable banners. Who can number the countless millions whose souls he

holds in severest bondage, tied and bound with the chains of sin and darkness, and in spiritual prisons and cells, whether Mahometan or heathen, whether Jewish or papistical, whether those of self-sufficient rationalism or daring infidelity.

Yes, without any arrogant pretensions, was he able to say, all these are mine. For the few who are not his, those who are left as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, (Isai. i. 8.) the worm Jacob, (Isai. xli. 14.) the despised house of Israel, (Jer. xxxiii. 24.) all these are lost, as nothing among the giant-cities of the fallen prince of angels; they are as the drop in the unfathomable ocean.

And what is there in the world, which the devil has not seized and laid under contribution for the purpose of extending and strengthening his kingdom; what has he not made subservient to the furtherance of his wicked plans, especially in the present day? Has he not already in his service the liberal sciences, and their professors, the periodical press, associations, and assemblies in the great world? Have not all these been readily enlisted in his cause? Who has turned the stream of poetry into that flood of romance and drama, which overflows the world with its thousand falsehoods and ungodly imaginations? Who acts so powerful a part in the representation of opera, and in the wanton melodies in which the powers of tone, which ought to be employed in the praises of God, are perverted for the destruction of souls, and to pour into the heart the most subtle poison? Who has pitched his camp among the high-flown systems of new-fangled philosophy, and from these bulwarks and bastions hurled his javelins against the gospel of peace? Who has raked up and

and exposed to public gaze that grovelling system of the present day, that sweet and effeminate scheme of *Æsthetics*, a corrupt code opposed to the gospel of Christ, and which, as an intoxicating potion, drowns the souls of men in a fatal slumber, from which, it is to be feared, they will awake, alas ! only by the thunders of the judgment ? Is it not the father of lies, the old serpent, the dragon from the bottomless pit ?

And let no one be surprised that satan speaks of a gift which is actually in his own power—"All these things *will I give thee*, if thou wilt fall down and worship me."

There are favours conferred by the wicked one, as there are blessings from heaven, and the world swarms with those who are indebted to him for their enjoyments and honours, their titles and distinctions. Yes, he has his gold, and his rewards for those who thus follow his banners, and know that their zeal in his service will be repaid in many ways ; and not unfrequently does God permit these reprobate men so exceedingly to indulge in the pomps and pleasures of this wicked world, and they so feast and fatten in the rich pastures of fleshly enjoyments, that at length the last trace of man is lost in these vessels of wrath, and they go down like beasts into hell.

"All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." Thus spake the tempter to our Lord. That the Son of the living God should bow the knee in worship to the old serpent ! Oh, it is the most daring, the most frightful proposition that ever has been made. Indeed, it seems as if it were the advice of a maniac, utterly inconsistent with the craft, and subtlety, and unworthy the giant intellect of the

prince of darkness. But let any one examine the critical situation in which Satan was then placed, and his shameless accursed suggestion will cease to be a matter of surprise.

The mask is now laid aside, for the devil conjectures, with increasing assurance, who it is that stands before him. The glorious triumphs which, notwithstanding his most subtle devices, our Lord had already achieved over him, left him scarcely the shadow of a doubt that Jesus was the Christ.

Irritated to the utmost, by the failure of his plots against the great opposer of his kingdom, and moved no less by the danger which threatened his dominion over the souls of men, he meditated, in hatred and rage, a last and decisive stroke; but reflection was now chained by the power of passion, and all prudence and discretion were swallowed up in the fiery waves of distracting doubt, which rolled through his soul in wild and horrible confusion.

When he became certain as to the person of his antagonist, and not till then, did Satan perceive, in its full extent, the great and vital importance of the conflict; and it was not concealed from him that one or other of them *must* fall.

Nevertheless, his last attack, however great the skill and power which he had hitherto displayed, is the most ill contrived of all, and with the desperation and impetuosity of a warrior who has given up all as lost, he rushes blindly upon his adversary, and is transfixcd by his sword.

This blow, which Satan now aimed against Jesus, was the last effort of desperation; by which we perceive, that relinquishing the endeavour to ensnare

the Son of God, and drive Him from the field, which was now evidently hopeless, he meant offensively to intimate, by a contemptuous blow, as it were, with the foot, that Jesus must not suppose He could compel all His enemies to bow their necks before Him.

With such desperate intentions, and foaming with fury, the devil began his magic jugglery, placed his enchanted mirror before the eyes of Christ, displayed to his view one sight after another of the most lovely regions of the earth, and their glory; and cried to him with grinning scorn and wild satanic derision, "Behold all these things: these delights and enjoyments shall be thine, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Away then, take the rich booty. Down in the dust, and do homage to thy Lord and Master."

The supposition may also be entertained, that from the circumstance of our Lord's refusing to give him the desired evidence, Satan had come to the conclusion that Jesus was not the incarnate Son of God, but only a great saint, yet still a man, against whom, as such, he might, unmasked, press other suggestions, more bold and gross.

This satanic suggestion was, as has been said, an act of desperation, and more an outbreak of vicious rage and satanic scorn than a temptation.

Believers also have frequently the same to suffer from the devil which their Master encountered in the wilderness, whilst he tempts them with the most abominable propositions, and infuses such blasphemous and detestable thoughts into their souls, that they shudder at their enormity.

But be comforted and undismayed, ye oppressed souls. That the wicked one thus buffets and spurns

you, arises from pure vexation and disappointment, that he is not able to swallow you up. Look upon these temptations as the revengeful vapouring of a powerless enemy, who, since he cannot prevail with sword and sling, throws mire and filth, to irritate you, at least; and if he cannot succeed by other means, endeavours, in this way, to give vent to his rage.

XV.

THE ISSUE OF THE CONFLICT.

SCARCELY had Jesus received the blasphemous counsel—scarcely had he glanced into the mirror of earthly glory and pleasure, which the devil had the insolence to hold before him—when it was fully manifest with whom he had to do. “These are thy possessions, thy kingdoms,” thought he, “and thou requirest to be worshipped? Thou art detected, thou foul spirit, the mask is fallen off, I know thee.”

With horror and disgust, the pure soul of the great High Priest turned away from the images of vanity and lust which Satan had conjured up before him. He grasped the iron shield of the word of God, against which all the fiery darts of the wicked one are quenched, and spake with the majesty of the first-born, to whom is given all power, both in heaven and in earth—“Get thee hence, Satan, for it is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.” (ver. 10.) Then did not the devil dare a second time to arrogate to himself divine honour—he was stricken to the ground—the battle was ended; and the Lamb of God stood pure, without spot, victo-

rious—the triumph achieved. With the sword of the Spirit, the written word—in the obedience of faith—did Jesus lay the dragon completely in the dust.

The temptation over which our Lord here came off victorious, not unfrequently is presented to his beloved children.

We have already remarked how Satan is able sometimes to show us, in his magic mirror, the kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them, in a moment of time. O yes; even the most holy upon earth must be conscious, that in the experience of the children of God, either hours or moments may sometimes occur, when the enjoyments and seductive allurements which they supposed to have been long before, by the grace of God, utterly dead, are again exhibited in the most attractive light before the eye of their imagination. Then does the sea of their senses and desires become impetuous and raging, and Satan leaves nothing untried, that he may drown the poor soul in this flood.

At such moments it is said to us quickly, unexpectedly, before we can recollect ourselves, “All this will I give thee if thou fall down and worship me.” Behold, we have only to do some little thing to gain all those golden mountains; it is only a little turning aside, of which, perhaps, no man may be aware; only a momentary prostration before the tempter; only a transient homage, and all is ours.

And O, my beloved, David and Solomon are not the only ones among the children of God who have been guilty of such a fall, that they might once more drink of the intoxicating cup of earthly pleasure.

Yet, in whatever way these falls may have taken

place, we feel deeply for our brethren who have been so surprised, and we condemn them not. No, we do not despise them; for we know our hearts, and are aware what we are, and how the tempter can paint the world so beautifully before the eyes of man, and give such enchanting colouring to its vanities. We are aware of this, and our prayer is, every moment, "Lead us not into temptation."

The wicked one, indeed, cannot be concealed when he draws near to us with such visions and shameless propositions. The enjoyments and treasures which he presents to us, and describes so glowingly, and the means which he proposes, by which we may become possessed of the same, betray him.

In such temptations as these he approaches us, not as an angel of light, but without the mask, and boldly. We then soon know who is our adversary, and this renders the struggle more easy.

We cannot, indeed, retire from the scene of conflict unwounded as Jesus; and seldom, without any motions of sinful inclination, can we withdraw from the sight of those seducing enchantments. And well is it for us if we only escape before that lust hath conceived and brought forth sin, (James i. 15.) and if unscathed, we can quit the field.

The weapons with which our Lord so easily repelled the last onset of the tempter are ours also, under similar circumstances—"It is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

This word, when uttered in faith against the devil, will break his strongest darts, as though they were stubble. And as often as he sees this armour flashing upon our breasts, his hopes will languish, and he can

only attempt to move us to do him reverence, and fall down for a moment at his feet.

“ *Then the devil leaveth him, and behold angels came and ministered unto him.*” (ver. 11.) This was the termination of this great and most important conflict; and never has Satan fled from any field of battle with such feelings of discomfiture; never has he, with a soul so torn and distracted, quitted an antagonist as at that time he must have left the fearful opponent of his kingdom. For to be so bruised upon the head, and to be compelled to lay down his weapons with so much shame, was as insupportable as it was strange to him. (Gen. iii. 15.)

As a dark cloud of the night, which the stormy wind drives, he hurried away, his fiery eyes rolling in desperation, and gnashing his teeth; and gladly would he cry to the mountains and hills to fall upon him, and cover him both from heaven and hell, that he might not hear the triumph of the angels over him, nor be upbraided by the hollow murmurings and howling cries of the spirits of hell at such a shameful overthrow.

But our Lord is safe. O how pleasing must it have been for him, after having been left, most fearfully, forty days, with the powers of darkness; (for Luke tells us, ch. iv. 2, that he is forty days tempted of the devil,) now suddenly to find himself in his own element again amid the blessed angels of God, who had come to pay their homage, and to minister to the mighty conqueror.

Then was fulfilled that which, in prophetic anticipation, the dying Jacob spake, “Judah is a lion’s whelp; from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he

stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion ; who shall rouse him up ? (Gen. xlix. 9.)

Yet this cessation from strife was not the end of the battle, but only a short respite. Satan, says Luke, departed from him for a season. (Luke iv. 13.) It was not long before he again stood before Jesus in full array, in the plain, and he continued to follow him with his slings and other missiles, till the great Sampson vanquished him by his own death on Golgotha, and tore for ever the sceptre from his hands. (Judges xvi. 30 ; Col. ii. 15.)

When the blood of the Lamb of God stained the accursed tree, then was the head of the serpent bruised according to the promise. (Gen. iii. 15.)

Our life, also, beloved children of the cross, will prove a scene of conflict even to the end. Days of repose and rejoicing will not be wanting to us in the wilderness, but the full unbroken Sabbath awaits us in the heavenly Canaan, in that rest which remaineth to the people of God. (Heb. iv. 9.)

As long as we dwell in these pilgrim-tents, the devil will not suffer his sword to rest in the scabbard—the roaring lion will not cease to go about seeking whom he may devour.

And when he shall cease to *triumph* over us, yet will he not desist from his *attempts*, nor suffer his wrath to cool ; but, by buffeting and otherwise assailing us, he will cause us to feel his hatred and his scorn. But let us not fear. “Thanks be to God,” we may joyfully exclaim with St. Paul, “Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Cor. xv. 57.)

The victories of our Surety are all ours through

faith. We have already triumphed before the conflict—and when also the dust of our strife with the powers of darkness covers the battle-field, and the fiery darts by thousands hiss around our heads, even when we fall in death, we remain victorious, and become more than conquerors through him that hath loved us.

Thrice blessed truth ! inestimable faith ! Whosoever walketh by this faith, his courage will never fail, and though he may *fall* in the struggle, *yet shall he rise again*, and stand erect, for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand. (Ps. xxxvii. 24 ; Micah vii. 8.)

“ Happy art thou, O Israel : who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency ! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee, and thou shalt tread upon their high places.” (Deut. xxxiii. 29.)

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